

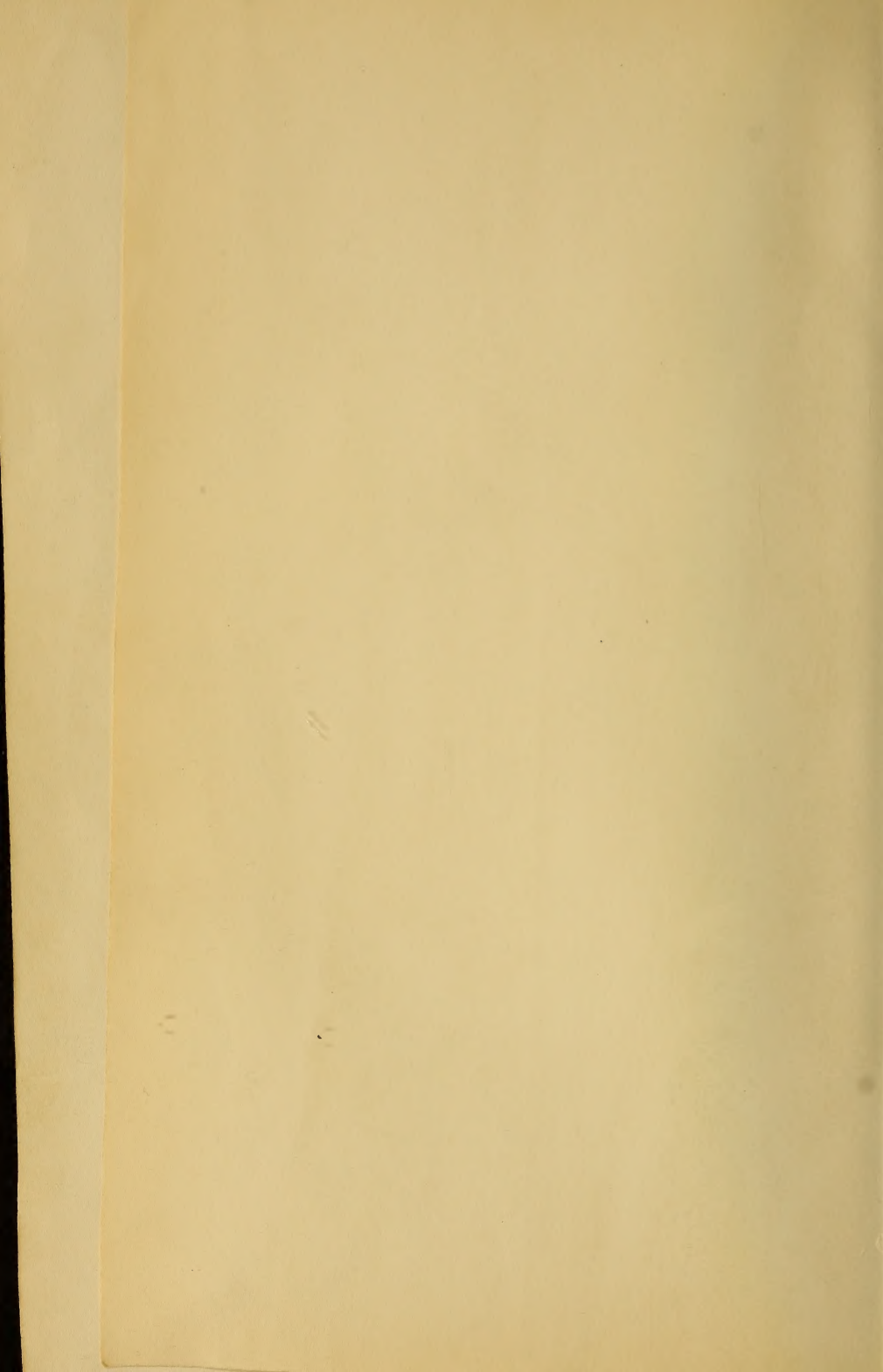


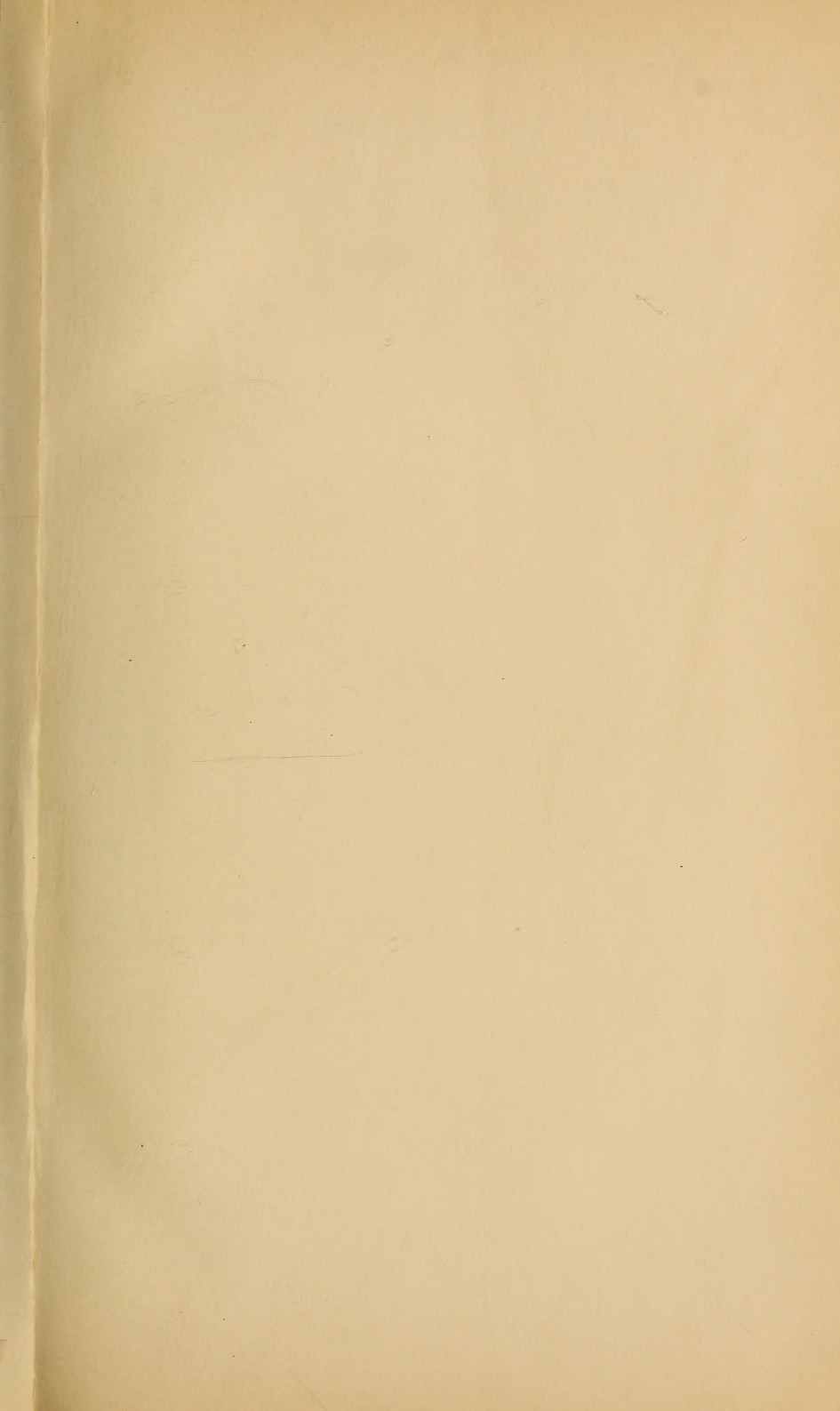
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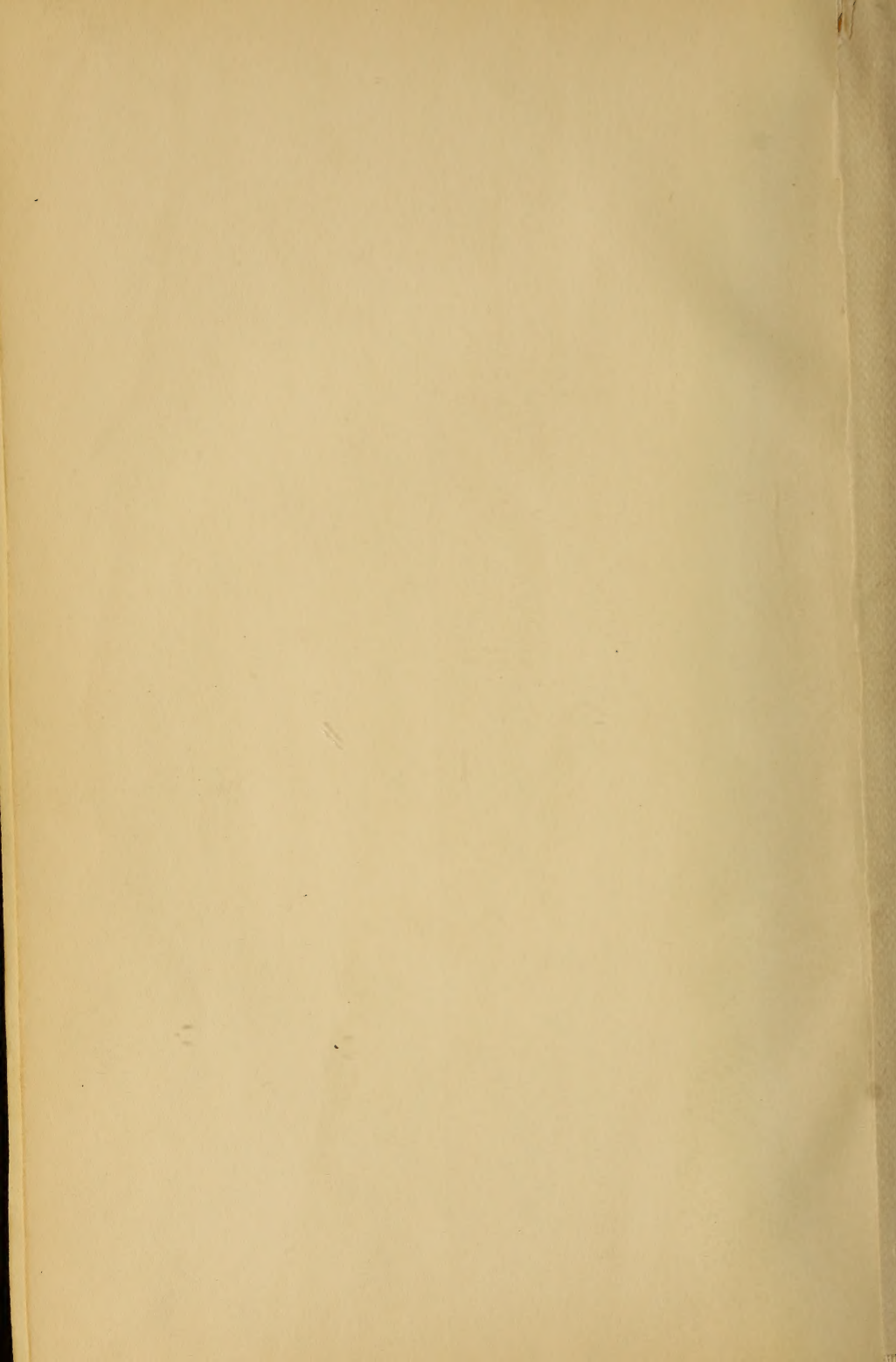
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THE HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE

FROM THE OATH OF STRASBURG
TO CHANTICLER

BY

ANNIE LEMP KONTA



NEW YORK AND LONDON
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THE HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

ORIGINS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

WITH the conquest of Gaul by Cæsar (58-51 B.C.) there began an intricate process of evolution which, continuing for more than nine centuries, finally gave birth to a French language and literature. The humble *Sequence of St. Eulalie*—fragment of a Latin church chant—and the historical *Oath of Strasburg*, sworn in French by Louis the Germanic to make it intelligible to the Franks of Charles the Bald, are but the embryo of what that language and literature came to be. But at the end of the tenth century, when the Capetian dynasty began to establish its sway and to consummate French unity, there arose a French national life, and with it a genuine national language and literature. In France, as elsewhere, poetry preceded prose in the infancy of letters; and we see those poetic beginnings in a brief composition on the *Passion of Christ*, and in the three hundred verses of the *Life of St. Léger*, the earliest regularly versified document in French. Our own taste does not find much to admire in this *Life*. Yet in its meager thread of narration, in its simple, dry precision—like to that of a bare chronicle—we perceive the earliest strivings of that intense creative power which has produced French literature, and has by no means exhausted itself in a thousand pregnant years of production.

When their country was reduced to the status of a Roman province by Cæsar, the Gauls, inferior to the Romans in civilization, had the Latin language imposed upon them—just as

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French, by a natural process, is forced upon the Arabs of Algeria.

The Latin brought to Gaul by the Roman soldiers and rustic colonists was not the classic tongue of Cicero and Virgil. At Rome, as in France to-day, there existed two languages, that of the educated and that of the peasant: the literary Latin of writers and scholars, and the vulgar Latin of the people. The popular Latin of the Gauls, the *Gallo-Roman*, as it was called after having supplanted the Celtic and having been subjected to a strong influence from the idioms brought in by the Germanic conquerors, was a language very different from the classic or literary Latin. It is called *Lingua Romana*¹ by present-day philologists in contradistinction to the literary Latin (*sermo eruditus*). With the Gallo-Roman language, which was spoken but not written, there was evolved a sort of literary Latin written by people more or less ignorant, in which constant grammatical errors are apparent. This was called the low Latin (*bas latin*).

The French language is not a mixture of Gallic and Latin but the popular Latin (*sermo plebeius*) introduced into Gaul by the Roman soldiers, just as, in the same manner, the Roman language was brought into the various other provinces of Rome, suppressing the indigenous dialects and, with various influences brought to bear upon it, evolving the Romance or neo-Latin languages.

France, Italy, and a large part of Germany were united by Charlemagne. But these three countries were distinct in customs, ideas, and especially in language. So it is not surprising that this vast empire, no longer held together by his genius, soon began to fall apart under his weak successors. Each of his three grandsons—Charles the Bald, Louis the Germanic, and Lothair—took his share, though only after bloody fratricidal wars—thus bringing to pass for the first time the complete political division of France, Germany, and the contested land of Lotharingia. The text of the solemn oath sworn by Louis and Charles, at a critical moment of the conflict, pledging them to mutual aid against Lothair, has

¹ Some of the Latin writers of Gaul were: Apollinaris Sidonius, Troguus Pompejus, and Sulpicius Severus.

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been preserved. Aside from its historical interest, the final separation of France and Germany, it possesses a very special linguistic value. It was in March, 842, that Louis swore the oath in French, Charles in German, for the understanding of their respective armies. This document, which (not yet French, but no longer Latin) invites the closest scrutiny for the study it affords of a language in transition, is thus quoted by the historian, Nithard: ¹

OATH OF LOUIS THE GERMANIC

OLD FRENCH

Pro Deo amur et pro Christian
poblo et nostro commun salva-
ment, d'ist di in avant, in quant
Deus savir et podir me dunat, si
salvarai eo cist meon fradre
Karlo et in adjudha et in cad-
huna cosa, si cum om per dreit
son fradra salvar dift, in o quid il
mi altresí fazet, et ab Ludher nul
plaid nunquam prindrai, qui
meon vol cist meon fradre Karlo
in damno sit.

MODERN FRENCH

Pour l'amour de Dieu et pour
le salut commun du peuple chré-
tien et le nôtre, à partir de ce jour
autant que Dieu m'en donne le
savoir et le pouvoir, je soutien-
drai mon frère Charles de mon
aide et en toute chose, comme on
doit justement soutenir son frère,
à condition qu'il m'en fasse
autant, et je ne prendrai jamais
avec Lothaire aucun arrange-
ment, qui, par ma volonté, soit au
détriment de mon dit frère
Charles.

English: For the love of God and for the common salvation of the Christian people and our own: from this day on, in so far as God give me knowledge and power, I shall save (support) my brother Charles, by assistance and in each thing (on all occasions), as one ought by right save his brother, in so far as he will do the same thing to me; and from Lothair shall I never take a pledge which may, by my will, be a damage to this my brother Charles.

The declaration of the soldiers of Charles's army furnishes another interesting document of incipient French in its unsettled orthography:

¹ Grandson of Charlemagne and one of the oldest French chroniclers.

THE HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE

OLD FRENCH

Si Lodhuwigs sacrament que
son fradre Karlo jurat conservat,
et Karlus meos sendra de sua
part non lo stanit, si jo returnar
non lint pois, ne jo, ne neuls
cui eo returnar int pois in nulla
adjudha contra Ludowig nun li
iv er.

MODERN FRENCH

Si Louis tient le serment qu' à
son frère Charles il jure et Charles
mon seigneur de sa part ne le
tient pas, si je ne l'en puis
détourner, ni moi ni nul que j'en
puisse détourner, en nulle aide
contre Louis ne lui y serai.

English: If Louis keeps the oath which he swears to his brother Charles, and Charles, my lord, on his part, does not keep it, and if I cannot turn him from it, neither I nor any other can turn him from it, I shall give no aid to him against Louis.

This language, crude and imperfect as it still was, represents a gradual evolution through nine centuries. The *Cantilène* or *Séquence de Sainte-Eulalie*, the oldest poetic monument of the French (from a manuscript of the Convent Saint Armand in Valenciennes), written only fifty years later, already shows a striking contrast to the *Oath*, because it is entirely French in character, and contains the fully developed article. It speaks of the martyrdom of Saint Eulalie of Merida, in 304, who under Maximianus, co-ruler of Diocletian, died for her faith:

Buona pulcella fut Eulalie
Bel avret corps, bellezour anima;
Voldrent la veintre li deo inimi
Voldrent la faire diaule servir.¹

But, as in the various regions of the vast Roman Empire, various languages were evolved from the Latin amongst the different peoples, owing to the imperceptible influence of clime and race, perhaps even through the subtle variations in structure of the vocal organs—so in France a variety of dialects found their way from the Pyrenees northward, and from the Alps to the sea—each one having points of contact

¹ A virtuous maiden was Eulalie, beautiful of mind and body; the enemies of God wished to vanquish her and make her serve the devil.

ORIGINS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

with, and divergences from, its neighbor. These dialects fall into two general groups or languages—the *langue d'oc* or language of Southern France usually designated as south of the Loire, and the *langue d'oïl*, language of Northern France, north of the Loire. Thus the original Roman province of Gaul, and the large basin of the Garonne—almost one half of France, in fact, did not speak French, and did not in the Middle Ages produce any French literature. Hence the rich and interesting literary expressions of the *langue d'oc*, flourishing though it did on French territory, has no place here; only in so far as those productions exercised a marked influence upon French literature proper are we concerned with them. Beyond this they have been afforded a separate literary treatment in a succeeding chapter.

The bizarre names, *oc* and *oïl*, originated in a custom of the Middle Ages, which designated languages by the particle of affirmation. The people of Southern France used *oc* (from the Latin *hoc*), and those of Northern France *oïl* (from the Latin *hoc ille*, which was contracted into *oïl*), to express "yes." Thus also the Italian was called the language of *si*, and the German the language of *ja*. Dante in his *De vulgari eloquentia sive idiomate*, says that the language of *oïl* puts forward its claim to be ranked above those of *oc* and *si* (Provençal and Italian).

The language of the North, the *langue d'oïl*, was in the eleventh century divided into five groups, or principal dialects, the boundaries of which were not accurately defined: the dialects of the Northeast, the *Picard* and the *Wallon*; of the Northwest, the *Normand*; of the East, the *Bourguignon*, the *Franc-Comtois*, the *Lorrain*, and the *Champenois*; of the West, the *Poitevin*, the *Angevin*, and the *Saintongeais*; of the Centre (in the *Ile de France*) the *Français* (French). Originally all these dialects might have been of equal standing, each sovereign in its own domain. As a literary instrument no one of them was inherently superior to any other: the employment of a certain one in a literary work or document might reveal simply the origin of the writer. This equal power and influence remained as long as there was no single center of Government—no capital of the nation to impose upon the whole country the need of a paramount language.

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The dukes of Normandy or Burgundy, equal to the Capetian Kings, humble lords of the *Ile de France*, used in their official acts the dialects of their respective provinces.

But early in the twelfth century, the petty kings of the *Ile de France* began to profess the doctrine of "manifest destiny" by benevolently assimilating their neighbors. Gradually, they annexed Berry (1101), Picardy (1200), Touraine (1203), Normandy (1204), and Champagne (1361).¹ Into these provinces they took the dialect of the *Ile de France*, which being the language of kings, was presently adopted as a model by cultivated society. Only the common people, averse to such invasion, refused to accept French, and clung to their old dialects. Thus the dialects of Picardy, Burgundy, and Normandy, fell from their high estate as the medium of literature to the lowly one of patois—that is to say, an idiom neither written nor spoken by educated people, and the end of the century found the French dialect of the *Ile de France* predominating, strengthened by the definite establishment of royal supremacy over the feudal lords and the fixation of Paris (owing to its university) as the intellectual center of the country. But it was not until the fourteenth century, when dialect after dialect had given way to the dominant one—the French of the *Ile de France*—that its triumph was complete and the French language took its place in history. The patois still spoken in Normandy, Picardy, and Burgundy, are not, therefore—contrary to popular belief—literary French corrupted in the mouths of peasants, but simply the remnants of the ancient provincial dialects.

Meanwhile, at the south of the Loire, the *langue d'oc* also had become almost extinct. The terrible crusade against the Albigenses (so called from Albi, in Languedoc, where the antisacerdotal sects were dominant), was not only a remarkable religious and political occurrence, but one of great literary significance as well. With one stroke it carried the French language clear to the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean; for when the Albigenses (Albigois) revolted against the Church of Rome, they were so vigorously opposed that, as

¹ These dates are not, of course, those of final annexation to the French crown.

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sects, they disappeared in great part at the end of the thirteenth century. A crusade against them was preached by Pope Innocent III, in 1208, and was led by Arnold of Citeaux and Simon de Montfort. This war of extermination, lasting for several years, was one of the bloodiest in history.

In 1272 Languedoc was incorporated in France, and the *langue d'oc* ceased to be written, and degenerated into patois. The *Limousin*, *Provençal*, *Languedocien*, and *Gascon* patois, persisting to-day in the respective provinces of Southern France, are merely the fragments of that glorious language which shone so bright at the time of the troubadours. The dialect of Catalonia was nearly identical with the *langue d'oc*—a similarity so complete indeed, that Catalonian, though spoken beyond the Pyrenees assumed the name of Limousin (Lemosi). The language of the South was more sonorous than that of the North. The very names of the poets—in the South, *troubadours*; in the North, *trouvères* (relating to the same French verb *trouver*)—indicate the characteristic variations in the two chief idioms.

The study of French origins takes us into the Middle Ages.¹ To estimate aright their value with respect to this period, we may profitably consider the opinions put forth by the eminent Romance scholar and critic, Gaston Paris. "We have outgrown," he says, "our attitude of disrespect for the Middle Ages. Time was when French scholarship sought its sources only in antiquity, or from its own more immediate learning; and when the 'Dark Ages' were significant simply as a stage of transition—essential to continuity, perhaps, but merely as a ring of lead that binds two chains of gold. But nowadays, science repudiates no period of history. Wherever it finds facts and laws, it pauses. It holds that all things that have existed deserve its attention; as far as possible, it strives to imitate the vast and serene impartiality of nature."

During this period of fermentation and social reconstruction, a new state had sprung up by the combination of Roman, German, and Christian institutions. The feudal system pre-

¹ From the Fall of the Roman Empire, 475, until the capture of Constantinople by Mahomet II, 1453, may be conveniently and with reason regarded as such.

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veiled and the two great powers of western Europe were the pope and the emperor.

In the hands of Augustin Thierry and his successors the history of the Middle Ages has become alive. These centuries are an epoch essentially poetic, that is to say, everything is spontaneous, original, unforeseen. The men of that time do not give to reflection the place it occupies in modern life. They do not observe themselves; they live naïvely, like children with whom reflected life developed by civilization has not yet stifled the free expansion of natural vitality. They have neither in the physical nor in the social world that idea of prearranged regularity which our reasoning power has given us. Undoubtedly, reason is the sovereign and ruling faculty, and its possession must be the highest aim of our efforts. But it is not poetry; it is too often its negation. Pure reason is an elevated region, serene and cold, like those grand summits where an eternal whiteness reflects a sun without clouds; life, with its forms and its colors, its songs and fragrances, its powerful and joyous disorder, is in lower regions. The older we grow, men or nations, the more does reason expel the imagination within us. A great critic of our days (Villemain) has said, "There exists in three fourths of men a poet who died young, and whom the grown man survives."

Taken as a whole and compared with ours, life in the Middle Ages appears eminently poetic. Literature was the image of this life. It has the same liberty, frankness, variety. It is not, like ours, hedged in by laws, restrained by prejudices or proprieties, or directed by classical examples; nothing prevents it from saying plainly and entirely what it wants to say. Above all, it is true; and that is its great merit. Unpreoccupied with rules, theories, questions of form, it expresses simply the emotions of the soul, the real sentiments and ideas of all. The public accepts it as the poet sings it. One does not criticise; one does not seek to discern whether a poem is well composed, original, correct in its versification—or whether a play ("mystery") conforms to the rules of dramatic art, whether a farce is kept within the limits of good taste and decency. The only question is whether the poet has made people admire, think, weep or laugh more than

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other poets; whether people have been moved by his productions; whether he has left in the soul the clear and living picture of his characters, the remembrance of his recitals, the imprint of his sentiments. The beliefs, the passions, the prejudices of the people are reflected naïvely and without coloring in this literature. There is not yet arisen between the learned and the unlearned that terrible distinction—the outcome of different instruction—which to-day separates people into two classes, almost foreign to each other: a class almost beyond the pale of literature, another class that disdains and ignores all that which does not conform to the rules set by its doctors. Neither in Greece nor in the Middle Ages did this distinction exist. The same poetry pleased all—the prince as well as the burgher, the knight as well as the peasant.

All this, however, is entirely true only of the first period of the Middle Ages, the period almost wholly consecrated to the epic. We do not speak here of the clerics, of those who knew Latin, and who wrote and spoke it among themselves. These remained without influence upon popular poetry, which they despised. The fusion of their science with the popular language and poetry occurring, almost simultaneously in France and in Italy toward the end of the thirteenth century marks the beginning of a new period. But from the second half of the twelfth century to the end of the thirteenth century, there is a tendency to a separation analogous to that of the learned and unlettered. Then arises, by a natural and ordinary process, that more restrained society which seeks to distinguish itself from the rest by the elegance of its life, the refinement of its customs, the conventional politeness of its manners. This élite is grouped naturally at the courts of the kings and princes; the term *courtesy* (*courtoisie*) is employed to designate its ideal. From that time on men are divided into two classes—the polite world and the *vilains*:¹ those who make up elegant society, who know its usages, share its ideas; and those who are excluded from it, and are ignorant of its refinements.

In this formation of a polite society the important rôle

¹ *Vilain* was used for rustic (noun).

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belongs to the women. They introduce superficially at least, if not really, into the manners a certain sweetness and urbanity, and infuse the rude and narrow bravery of the feudal lord with the sentiment of *galanterie*. The tournaments are changed into gallant feasts over which the women preside, or they replace by social games and pleasures the too virile amusements of the eleventh century. Thus inspired, the rude barons who knew only the chase and war are transformed into the gallant knights of the time of St. Louis (1226-1270)—knights who pass a part of their lives in feasting and assemblies, who vie with each other in the richness of their costume, in luxurious modes of living, who carry proudly on their helmets, when going to battle, the symbol of their lady's love. This incessant influence refines, ennobles, purifies, and perhaps also weakens, character. The virtues and graces of this chivalrous society have been singularly exaggerated; but it has done much for our education, and, in developing its traditions, France, its true fatherland, has become and remained the most social and polite nation of Europe. This new world needed a poetry distinct from that of the people, a poetry courtly as the society for which it was destined. And this poetry appeared, on the one hand, in the versified romances of the Round Table,¹ and, on the other, in the greatest lyric works of the Middle Ages.

In the primitive times of all countries, poetry is anonymous; it belongs to no one in particular, and the entire people take part and reflect themselves in it. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, before the separation of the *courtly* and *vilains*, before the creation of an artificial literature, when the *jongleurs* (*troubadours*; Greek: *rhapsodes*), loved and understood equally by all, were the sole historians, the sole poets and scholars, the Middle Ages found expression in their greatest power and variety. Even later, in spite of the separation of the people in two classes, in spite of the introduction of popular literature, there lived a poetry which addressed itself to the whole nation: the poetry of the theater. In the four-

¹ This will be treated later in detail. In Arthurian legend the table was made by the magician Merlin for Uther Pendragon, who gave it to the father of Guinevere, from whom, in turn, Arthur received it, together with one hundred knights, as a wedding gift.

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teenth and fifteenth centuries the mystery plays were what the epic songs had been before them. Their exclusively religious subjects gave them equal rights and claims to the sympathy and respect of all, and in spite of their slight literary value, they are one of the most original and powerful creations of the middle ages; and if the individual drama has been substituted for these great national representations, these logically and spontaneously developed mysteries have inspired some of the religious plays and *autos* by Calderon,¹ and the historical plays by Shakespeare. So the poetry of the Middle Ages, in its principal aspects, was epic, lyric, and dramatic.

But all these branches of French literature during the Middle Ages vary according to the differences of spirit of all the stages of society that participate in them, and especially according to the local and racial characteristics of the territories from which they spring. Gustave Lanson, the admirable literary historian of France, says that "each one of those regions furnishes its part in the literature of the Middle Ages. Normandy and France proper apply themselves to the editing of their *chansons de geste* ('songs of heroic deeds'), as Burgundy in its century of separate existence creates an epic of its own. In Champagne bloom romance, lyrical idealism, and personal memoirs. The noisy communes of Picardy rejoice in dramatic poetry. Paris is the center: she produces all, avails herself of all; everything flows to her. Rutebeuf leaves his Champagne, Jean de Meung his Orléanais, and both transfer their great talents to the capital. Then, during long centuries, the provinces, one by one, as they enter upon national unity, receive the one French language, and mingle their original genius with its central spirit: crude and dreamy Brittany, reinfusing French literature with Celtic melancholy; inflexible and reasoning Auvergne; Lyons, mystic and passionate city despite the superficial agitation of material interests; the entire South, so varied and so rich, in one place more Roman, in another still marked by the passage of the Arabs or the Moors, preserving under all the alluvial

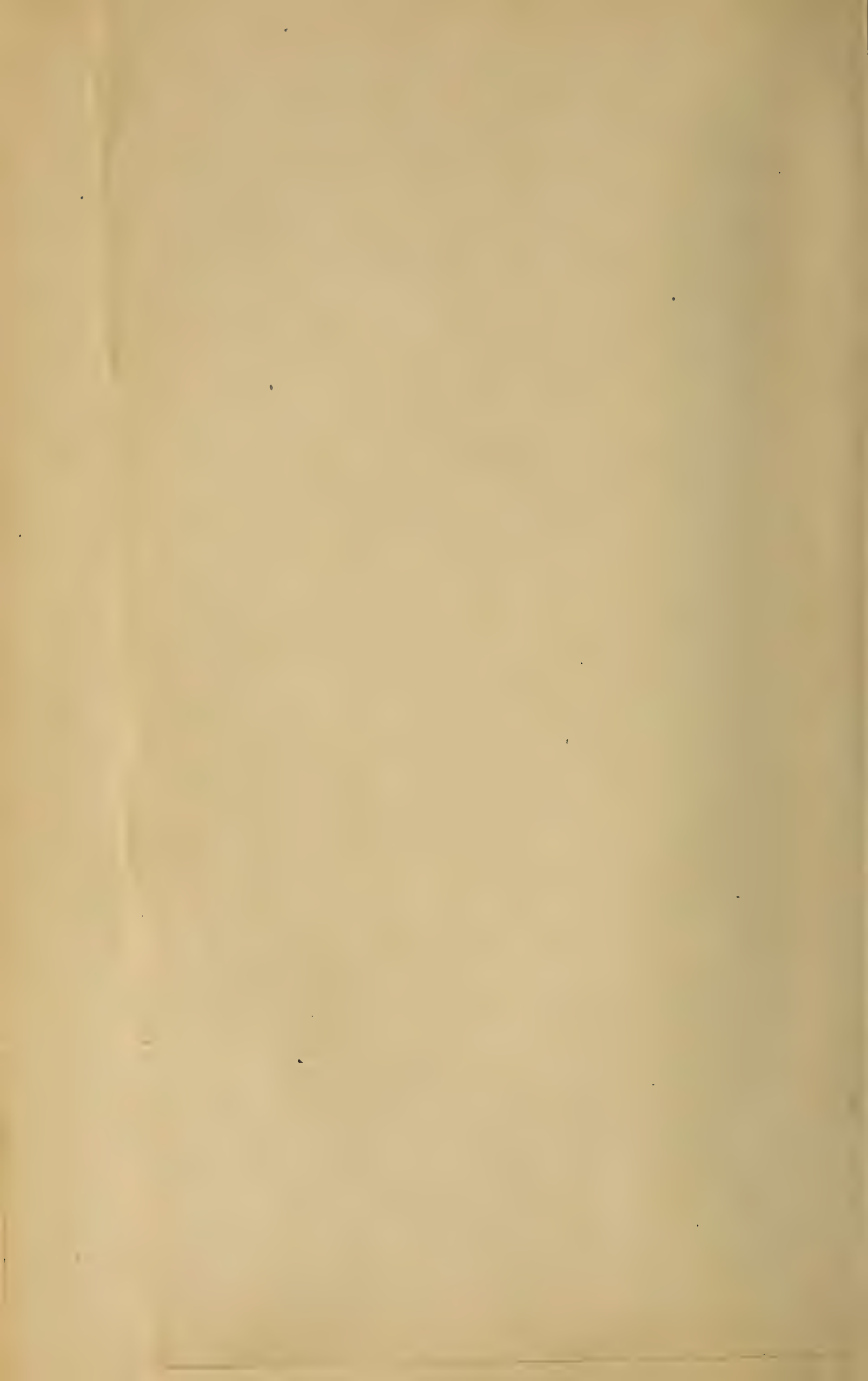
¹ Pedro Calderon de la Barca (Madrid, 1600-81), one of the most celebrated of the Spanish dramatists and poets.

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strata with which history has successively covered it, its primitive layer of Iberian population; hot and vibrating Provence, all charm or all fire; Gascony, scintillating with vivacity, light and delicate; and strong and powerful Languedoc, perhaps the one country of France where forms and tones of poetry are best felt in their special beauty."

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CHAPTER II

EPICS

EPIC poetry—"poetic narrative which precedes the ages when history is written"—is, in the natural order of development as admitted by most critics, posterior to lyric and anterior to dramatic poetry. The first form of song was the hymn originating with the ceremonies of the sanctuary. Then men turned to the description of nature, of love, of death, and this poetry usually sung to the accompaniment of the lyre, was called lyrical poetry. The epic was born when men began to narrate the lives of their heroes and to sing their praises.

The beginnings of the national epics are lost in the pre-historic times of nations¹ and the true epic is first found with the peoples of the Aryan race. The source of the epic is the oral transmission of the national history of a people, usually centered around one personage in the time when the military nobility was considered the flower of humanity. This oral information of the historical facts, at first legendarized, then greatly exaggerated, finally became fantastic and was perpetuated in writing. Thus arose the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Greece, the *Mâhâbhârata* and the *Râmâyana* of India, the *Nibelungen* of Germany, the *Poema del Cid* of Spain, and the *Chanson de Roland*, the greatest of French epics, in France.

Pio Rajna, an Italian scholar, has established the Germanic origin of the French epic: "romane dans son développement,

¹ The triumph song of Deborah (1300 B.C.) and the twelve adventures of the Shimshon (Samson) saga show traces of epic songs. Pentaur, poet and priest of the court of Egypt, sang the heroic deeds of King Rameses II in the Battle of Kadish (twelfth century B.C.). *Schi-King* is a collection of heroic songs of the Chinese collected by Confucius (sixth century B.C.).

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elle était germaine dans son origine." All the nations who inhabited Gaul from the sixth to the seventh centuries contributed something toward the future French epic: the Celts, however, only furnished the characteristics of some of its heroes, the Romans gave the epic its form in language (vulgar Latin) and in versification, the church gave its faith, but the Germanic tribes brought the greatest influence to bear, for it is owing to them that the epic was born in France. When these tribes invaded Gaul they introduced their custom, inherent with them for several centuries, of singing in popular verse their origins, their victories, their gods, and their heroes,¹ and they did not lose their taste for these epic recitals which exalt courage and charm the imagination, but communicated them to the Gallo-Romans. Their ideas of war, of royalty, of government, of family, of woman and of law, then entered the French national poetry and gave it the epic form, triumphing over the popular songs of lyrical and narrative character, sung by the Gallo-Romans. These popular songs were called *Cantilènes* and were sung both in the old German² of which an example is the *Cantilène Saucourt* (ninth century); and in the vulgar Latin or Gallo-Roman (*Lingua Romana*), as the *Cantilène de Sainte Eulalie* (ninth century) which was the first monument of French national poetry.

Epic composition on the soil of France may run back for its origins to the poetic history of the Merovingians, where traces of old French poems may be found; in the *chansons de geste*, certain recitals, certain personages, moral traits, customs civil and military, are the manifest residuum of the most ancient poetry and the most ancient civilization of France. In the fifth century, songs on Clovis were probably sung, and in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries poems on Dagobert, Charles Martel and Pépin le Bref may have existed. Of particular interest is the epic of Floovant³ taken

¹ Tacitus (first century), in his history of the Germans, states that the Germans had an epic poetry whose hero was *Sigofred*.

² The *Ludwigslied* is supposed to be the last type of cantilène sung in German on French soil.

³ Published by Michelant and Guessard: *Les anciens poètes de la France*.

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from a chronicle of the eighth century, the *Gesta Dagoberti*, and which tells that Floovant is really Dagobert, the name Floovant signifying "descendant of Clovis." But of this period there is little preserved, and of the fragments which remain it is difficult to define their characteristics. There is a tradition that Charlemagne caused the epic treasures to be collected, and that his ascetic son, Louis the Pious (814-40), who had been coerced in his childhood to learn them by heart, had no sooner ascended the throne than he ordered them all destroyed—by way of compensation for the ennui he had suffered in memorizing them. However this may be, nearly all have melted from sight with the snows.

During several centuries these national and religious poems were orally transmitted from generation to generation until Charlemagne became the principal hero, his legend absorbing all others, and in the tenth century was born the *chanson de geste* of truly French character. A number of these *chansons de geste* were inspired by the oral traditions circulating during the Merovingian period, others were inspired by the old *Cantilènes*. "Our *chansons de geste*, therefore," says Léon Gautier, "are military and not clerical, and owe nothing to certain Latin chronicles from which it is believed by some they have arisen." He tells us that the *Chronique de Turpin* is posterior to the first *chansons de geste*. "The *Chronique de Turpin* and most of the analogous legends are the works of some rhetorician of the monasteries who copied without intelligence and without animation our first *chansons de geste*." F. Scholle, also asserts that the poems had for a long time been preserved by oral tradition before having been written, and that the various readings of the different compilations are due partly to the intervention of the *jongleurs* and not solely to the copyists.

According to Marius Sepet there was a transition between the *cantilène* and the *chanson de geste*—the *chanson épique*—of which the *Vie de Saint Alexis* gives an exact idea.

The *cantilène* was a short popular song sung by the people, whereas the *chanson de geste* was developed principally among the nobility which was also the warrior class. From this class were drawn chiefly the *trouvères*, many of whom composed and sang their own songs. As a rule, however, the

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songs composed by the *trouvères* were sung by a special class of singers, heritage of the *scopas* (of the Franks) and who were called in French *joglers* (joculares) or *jogledors* (joculatores), later *jougleors*, *jougleurs* (*jongleurs* being an entirely modern form). It was the *jongleur* who sang the poems of fame, generally to the accompaniment of the viola (*vielle*). He went from court to court, from castle to castle to sing them as the *scopa* had done.

Edgar Quinet, philosopher, poet, and historian, has told us how the epics were composed and put forth by the medieval French rhapsode. For six dreary winter months the feudal castle has remained enveloped in clouds. There have been no tournaments, no war, few strangers and pilgrims, to break the monotony of the days; the sad, interminable evenings are poorly filled by the game of chess. With the swallows the return of the *trouvère* is awaited. On a fine day in May he sends forth his *jongleurs* to recite his poems to the burghers and the common people in the little towns of the interior. Presently he himself is seen following the escarpement leading to the castle. Without delay, from the evening of his arrival, the barons, squires, and ladies assemble in the great paved hall to hear the poem he has composed during the winter. The minstrel does not read his poem—he recites it; and now and again, in impassioned passages, he lifts his voice in song, to the accompaniment of harp or fiddle. His bearing is proud, yet of ingenuous frankness. Observe the complexion of his audience:

“Seigneurs, or faites paix, chevaliers et barons,
Et roi et ducs, et comtes et princes de renoms,
Et prelates, et bourgeois, gens de religion,
Dames et demoiselles, et petits enfants.¹”

In some cases he has composed his song by order of the lord who has lent him the chronicle containing the tradition he embellishes. The ancestors of his host figure therein. Neighboring places—little towns, the forts, castles, and mon-

¹ Lords, hold your peace, chevaliers and barons, and king, and dukes, and counts, and princes of renown, and prelates, and bourgeois, and men of religion, matrons and maidens and little children.

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asteries, are named. The name of France is never pronounced without qualification: it is sweet, pleasant, praised or honored France. The minstrel speaks to his auditors of what they know and love the best—of tournaments and of battles. In the virtues he ascribes to his heroes there is little variety, but his terms are striking and energetic. "Proud of thought," "brave as a lion," "after the fashion of a proud man," are phrases oft recurring. He sings of the great deeds of Oliver, who, wounded to death, arises from his bed to defy the Saracen chief; of the horse Bayard, which the squires bleed to drink its blood while beset by famine in the castle of Renaud; of the conquest of Barbastre, or the battle of Alichamp—both episodes in the Carolingian cycle of epics; of the coming of the Emir's daughter to the prison of the knights; of Charlemagne's complaint upon hearing the horn of Roland. Often the poet is powerless to regulate the disorder of confused traditions: he falls back on the exclamation, "Oyez seigneurs!" ("Listen, my lords!")

In those warlike assemblies the voice of the minstrel rang like sword on shield in a tournament, and was echoed sonorously by the objects about him. The battlements of the castle, the wind blowing through the halls, the signals from the watch towers, the clattering chains of the drawbridges—all these are in some measure a part of his poem. What he does not say, the surroundings and the memories of the auditors supply. With the coming of autumn the minstrel's song is over; he departs, laden with gifts of precious vestments, fine weapons, horses with elaborate trappings. If not already a knight, he is, perhaps, made one. Then, in his absence, the life of the manor loses its expression, and relapses into silence and monotony.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the jongleur's profession was ennobling, even heroic. He followed the armies, aroused them to battle—perhaps took a brave part in it himself. We have noted that one such jongleur, Taillefer by name, was present at the battle of Hastings, and sang to the Normans the epic of Roncesvalle (from the *Roman de Rou* by Wace, oldest poet of the Breton Cycle):

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“Taillefer qui mult bien chantout
Sur un cheval qui tost alout
Devant le duc alout cantant
De Charlemaïne et de Rollant
Et d'Olivier et des vasalles
Qui mururent à Renchesvals.”¹

But the jongleur did not remain long on the height. As poetic inspiration waned, he himself sank. In the forefront of the armies, at the courts of kings, in the service of the great lords, he rode gaily a good horse. But in the fourteenth century he fares afoot, in shabby but gaudy attire, carrying his fiddle on his back, and stopping at public places to draw an audience. He would play a prelude, sing a popular song—and pass the plate. Reduced to such shifts, he is presently confounded with clowns, with the owners of dancing bears, with sword swallows. From the exigencies of his plight we have derived a slang phrase, *payer en monnaie de singe* (to pay in monkey coin); for, lacking the wherewithal for bridge tolls, he was constrained to “cut a monkey shine,” and so pass on. In the fifteenth century his misery became extreme, his reputation detestable. But in high and low estate he was the needed interpreter of that poetry which he helped to foster, and which replaced for the people both reading and theater.

According to Gaston Paris, the jongleurs have played an important rôle in the development of the French epic which finally comprised an immense epic material, and which toward the middle of the eleventh century spun itself out into long poems and later was divided into cycles. Léon Gautier's definition of a cycle is a number of popular poets grouped around a hero or an important event which becomes the subject of their poems. Joseph Bédier tells us in his famous *Légendes épiques*, how the trouvères of the thirteenth century distributed all their epic poems (the hundred *chansons de geste* which have been preserved and many others which have been lost) into three cycles:

¹ Taillefer, the great singer, on a swift horse, before the duke went singing of Charlemagne and of Roland and of Oliver and the vassals who died at Roncesvalle.

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N'ot que trois gestes en France la garnie:
 Du rois de France est la plus seignorie,
 Et l'autre après, bien est droiz que gel die
 Est de Doon a la barbe florie . . .
 La tierce geste qui molt fist a proisier
 Fu de Garin de Monglane le fier. (GIRART DE VIANE.)¹

These three groups are: First, the Royal Cycle consecrated to the legend of Charlemagne and to the national wars, of which the greatest poem is the *Chanson de Roland*. In this cycle Gaston Paris also places the poems relating to the Merovingians: *Floovant*, the most ancient; *Les Saisnes*; *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* (poem of the eleventh century); and *Le Roi Louis*, a beautiful poem of the eleventh century and of which only a fragment of six hundred verses has been preserved. Second, the Cycle of Doon de Mayence, the center of which is Renaud de Montauban,² and which is consecrated to the wars of the barons among themselves or against Charlemagne. The principal poems of this group are *Doon de Mayence*, *Les quatre fils Aimon* from the ancient version of Renaud de Montauban (twelfth century). Third, the Cycle of Garin de Monglane, composed of twenty-four romances of which William of Orange³ is the principal hero and which tells of the wars of the Provençals against the Saracens. Among these are: *La Chanson d'Aliscans*, *Girart de Viane*, *Le Roman de Garin de Monglane*. It is said that the trouvères having divided the epic legends into three cycles, also established a mystical relation between the three chiefs of these three cycles: Charlemagne, Doon de Mayence, Garin de Monglane were born on the same day, at the same hour, in the midst of miracles.

¹ There are but three *gestes* in rich France;
 That of the King of France is the most esteemed,
 And the next, 'tis but right I should say so,
 Is that of Doon with the white beard . . .
 The third *geste* in which there is much to praise
 Is that of proud Garin de Monglane.

² According to some authorities Ogier le Danois is the central figure of this cycle.

³ A manuscript in Boulogne contains about a dozen compositions with the title, *Li Roumans de Guillaume d'Orange*.

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With the great cycles a number of small cycles originated in the provinces of France, such as the bloody and savage Cycle of the Lorrains, the cycle of hatred and private feuds; the Cycle of Girart de Roussillon; the Cycle of Aubri de Bourgoing and that of Raoul de Cambrai. Each of these cycles was independent of the other and not one, says Léon Gautier could be reasonably attached to any of the great cycles, yet owing to a sort of "cyclical monomania," the trouvères attached them to the three great cycles.

The most famous of the great epic narratives transmitted to us in literary form is the *Chanson de Roland*, which, in the form afforded us by the Oxford manuscript, precedes the year 1080 A.D.¹ The episode on which was wrought the *Chanson de Roland*² seemed in its actuality so trivial to the historians³ of Charlemagne's reign that they but briefly recorded it. The Caliphate of Cordova in Spain had been dismembered, and one of the warring Moorish chiefs who had shared in its partition, invoked the aid of Charlemagne against the Emir. A French army descended upon Spain, possessed Pamplona, and approached Saragossa. Then Charles, having secured hostages from the Emir, and being threatened by an uprising of the Saracens, deemed it wise to return. He passed the Pyrenees in safety with the bulk of his army; but the Basques fell upon the rear guard at Roncevaux—a trap into which Charles had foolishly led them—and his nephew, Roland,⁴ in command, perished there on the 15th of August, in the year 778. On such a slight structure of fact was erected the greatest epic of France.

It is certain that the *Chanson de Roland*, as we possess it, was not derived directly from the original popular forms, but is a growth and an elaboration from the great body of epic songs produced in the primitive period of spontaneous invention. In its oldest written form it represents, at the least, a

¹ There are eight manuscripts of the *Chanson de Roland*, of which those of Oxford and of the Library of St. Mark in Venice are the oldest.

² The *Chanson de Roland* was translated in all European languages; there is even an Icelandic version.

³ The historical facts of this poem, which are very meager, are given by Eginhard, historian of Charlemagne (*Eginhardi Vita Caroli Magni IX*).

⁴ Historically, Roland was not Charlemagne's nephew.

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second or third stage of the legend. Gaston Paris writes of it: "The last adapter of the poem, whom we may place about 1080, has fashioned a poem in which contradictions and obscurities are not lacking, but which is presented on the whole with a certain unity and an incontestable grandeur. It is the dominant work of the French Middle Ages: it sums up their highest ideal, it presents their most powerful effort, it transmits to posterity all that was most vital and lasting in those times—patriotism, honor, and duty—and it deserves to remain always for France a truly national work. It is the most perfect flower in that fruitful field of poetry, blooming in the heroic age of France, which we call *chansons de geste*—songs woven around the facts, or the reputed facts, of history.¹ It seems probable that all the poems of this kind are a sort of vulgar development of much shorter songs—like to those which Germania's warlike tribes consecrated to the glory of their heroes.

This *Chanson de Roland*, though it belongs in its present form to the last third of the twelfth century, was discovered in an Oxford manuscript by Francisque Michel as late as 1836. According to some authorities its author was a Norman who lived in England, Touroude or Theroulde, mentioned in the last verse of the epic: "Ci falt la geste que Turolfus declinet." (This is the *geste* which Turolfus ends.) Léon Gautier asserts that one may interpret this sentence in three ways: A poet who has finished his poem; a scribe who has finished copying it; a jongleur who has finished relating it; and therefore it were better to regard the *Chanson de Roland* as an anonymous poem. There are 4,002 verses, in all, divided into five parts. The first part is concerned with the embassy of the Saracen King, Marsile, to Charlemagne, and the treason of Ganelon, Charlemagne's vassal. In the second, acting on the pledge of Marsile and the good faith of Ganelon, Charles leaves Spain, where he had been at war for a long time. Roland, his nephew, commands the rear guard, and is accompanied by Olivier and the Bishop Turpin. The third part, and the most beautiful, discloses Roland passing through

¹ *Geste* (from the Latin neuter plural, *gesta*, which becomes in French a feminine substantive) was used in the sense of "history." Later on, *une geste* came to mean in French an epic poem.

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the gorge of Roncevaux, where, in violation of the Saracen oath, he is attacked, and defends himself heroically. In the fourth division the Emperor, who has heard too late the despairing blast of Roland's horn, returns to the scene of carnage, smites the Saracens, and gathers the bodies of his dead. In the last scene of all—the traitor Ganelon is caught and put to death.

Of all the episodes of the *Chanson* that of the death of Roland¹ is the most pathetic. The dying hero laments the fate of “Durandal,” his sword, which must not fall into the hands of the enemy, or of some coward. As if it were a living thing, he reminds it of exploits performed, and of the holy relics in its golden sheath. But death is creeping to his heart; he lies down, face upturned, his sword, and his horn “Oliphant”² under him. He prays that God will forgive him his sins; and, with conscience eased, sweet memories come to him:

De dulce France, des humes de sun lign,
De Charlemagne, sun seigneur, qui le nourrit.³

Again imploring the divine grace, with his right hand he extends his glove toward God, as a sign of chivalrous faith; and it is taken by St. Gabriel. Then, reclining his head on his arm, “with folded hands he went to his end” (“jointes ses mains est alets à sa fin”). Finally, God sends his angels, who convey the count's soul to Paradise. The pathos and simplicity in the poem on Aude's death is striking:

MORT D'AUDE

(Modern French translation)

L'Empereur est revenu d'Espagne:
Il vient à Aix, la meilleure ville de France.

¹ The phrase “to give a Roland for an Oliver” (a blow for a blow) comes from the legend which tells that Roland fought for five days with Oliver, but as they were equally matched, neither was victorious.

² The sword and horn which tradition says Roland won from the giant Jutmundus.

³ Of sweet France, the men of his race, of Charlemagne, his lord who brought him up.

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Monte au palais, entre en la salle.
 Une belle damoiselle vient à lui: c'est Aude.
 Elle dit au roi: "Où est Roland le capitaine,
 Qui m'a juré de me prendre pour femme?"
 Charles en est plein de douleur et d'angoisse;
 Il pleure des yeux, il tire sa barbe blanche:
 "Sœur, chère amie, dit-il tu me demandes nouvelles d'un homme mort.
 Mais va, je saurai te remplacer Roland;
 Je ne puis te mieux dire: je te donnerai Louis,
 Louis, mon fils, celui qui tiendra mes marches."
 ——— "Ce discours m'est étrange," répond belle Aude.
 "Ne plaise à Dieu, ni à ses saints, ni à ses anges,
 Qu' après Roland je vive encore!"
 Lors elle perd sa couleur et tombe aux pieds de Charles.
 Elle est morte soudain: Dieu veuille avoir son âme! ¹

Antedating the epic of Roland is a singular production (about 1060) which we cannot ignore—a complete poem, written in heroic verse, entitled *The Pilgrimage of Charlemagne to Jersualem*, the only comic chanson de geste existing (found in a manuscript of the thirteenth century in the British Museum). An abstract of this extraordinary composition will prove interesting:

¹ DEATH OF AUDE

(Literal translation)

The Emperor has returned from Spain:
 He arrives at Aix, the best city of France.
 He rides up to the palace, enters the hall.
 A beautiful lady comes to meet him: it is Aude.
 She says to the king: "Where is Roland the chief,
 Who swore to take me for wife?"
 Charles is filled with sorrow and anguish;
 His eyes weep, he pulls his white beard.
 "Sister, dear friend," says he, "you ask me about a dead man.
 But I shall know how to fill Roland's place.
 I cannot say better: I will give you Louis,
 Louis, my son, he who will rule over my lands."
 . . . "Tis a strange speech you make me," answers fair Aude.
 "God and his saints and his angels forbid,
 That I continue to live after Roland!"
 Then the color leaves her face and she falls at the feet of Charles.
 She died suddenly: God have her soul!

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Charlemagne, says our imaginative author, stood one day, crown on head, before a mirror, admiring his majestic appearance. His queen, in a taunting spirit, flung at him the gibe that in the person of the Emperor Hugo of Constantinople there reigned a sovereign more kingly than he. Charlemagne's vanity was stung. Swearing a great oath that he would test her tale by looking upon this monarch, and that if she had spoken falsely he would behead her on his return, he set forth immediately for Constantinople accompanied by his twelve paladins. On the way he tarried in Jerusalem, to make his devotions, and the Patriarch paid him all honor and gave him many precious relics. We learn from the veracious poet that Charles and his peers repaired to that church "where the Lord Himself sang His first mass with His Apostles." There were the thirteen chairs which no one since had dared to occupy; but Charles undaunted, took the seat of Jesus, while the twelve peers seated themselves in the chairs of the Apostles.

When Charles and his companions reached Constantinople the emperor gave them a banquet—a banquet so copious of wine that the Frankish ruler and his paladins boasted in their cups that they would do extravagant deeds. Charles himself declared that with one stroke of his sword he would halve a horse and the ironclad knight that bestrode him. Roland, on his part, undertook to overthrow the city walls with a blast from his horn, and to tear out the beard of the Greek emperor. Another paladin, not to be outdone, vowed that he would turn the river from its course and inundate the capital. These boasts, and others not very becoming, being reported to Hugo by a spy hidden conveniently in a hollow column, the royal host informed his guests that they would be detained until they had made good their vauntings. Greatly embarrassed, they sought to excuse themselves, but Hugo would not relent. So they prayed to Heaven for aid, invoking the saints whose relics they bore with them. And it came to pass that the walls of the city began to fall, and the water to pour in. Hugo asked no more, but showered presents on the pilgrims and bade them depart as they had come. Finally, we learn that Charles, upon his return home, forgave the queen, in view of the pleasures he had tasted on his journey.

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The external form of these poems varies little. The *Chanson de Roland* is in couplets, tirades, or stanzas (*laisses*).¹ Every stanza forms a natural division of the narrative. The couplet is composed in the Roland poem of at least twelve to fifteen verses and becomes much more developed in the later poems. Assonance at first prevails—assonance consisting in a repetition of the last accented vowel in a word independently of the consonants following it. Later the rhyme prevails.

Charles Aubertin, author of the *Origins of French Poetry* describes the epics thus: They disclose a happy instinct, a brave fervor; we note a welling forth of naïve and forceful qualities, the beginnings of grandeur. But art is absent, composition is almost wanting. The recital is neither rich nor graceful; it is rather like a good old breast-plate, and its penetration is that of an iron sword. The verses, running all alike, following the one upon the other with a similarity of sound, suggest medieval barons in ponderous armor. One of poetic intuition may perceive an entire moral state far removed from our own—a less cultivated, a less complex humanity, yet young and full of life; and one undergoes with joy its fortifying influence. And this is the true merit of the French epic poems. If the literary interest frequently flags, if the poetry falls below mediocrity, there remains nevertheless the historic interest—that is to say the accurate picture of feudal manners in their living originality. It is here one must repair if he would see the portrait and the reflection of an epoch which the later French chroniclers have by no means described—which Joinville, Froissart, Villehardouin himself, in their primitive rudeness, did not know. The *chansons de geste* are, in a word, the poetic history of feudalism.

Gaston Paris, who has set forth the immense influence of the French heroic epics upon the Germanic and Latin world of Europe tells us that they were transplanted early to the neighboring countries: England, Germany, Holland, Norway, Spain, but above all, in Italy, where dialects more or less analogous to the French prevailed. The poems first sung in

¹ See Léon Gautier's *Chanson de Roland* (texte critique, eighth edition).

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French were then strongly influenced by the dialects of Northern Italy and a romantic element was introduced. In the course of time, these Franco-Italian poems were imitated in Italian verse and prose, culminating in an epic poetry such as Ariosto's brilliant *Orlando Furioso*, Bajardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, Tasso's *Goffredo* (later called *Gerusalemme Liberata*), Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* and others. As for the prose—the romances—they continue to delight the people. Even to-day a compilation made from several of them and published with the title, *Reali di Francia*, enjoys a vogue which numberless editions attest. It is the merit of the epics that they parallel true history with the national legendary history, and indicate the transformation imposed from century to century on persons and events.

The reign of Charlemagne "inspired" the poets of subsequent periods to produce innumerable verified romances which it would be tedious to analyze. But in the older poems the type of Charlemagne is apotheosized, whereas in the subsequent romances, in order to please the great vassals of the thirteenth century in their struggle against royalty, he is distorted into caricature. The rôle of woman also changes; in the early poems she was depicted as rude and wild, but chaste; in the later poems she is represented as dishonorable and lascivious. In short, the older poems are more simple, but natural, the later ones are false and strained. Léon Gautier informs us that no Provençal *chanson de geste* has been preserved, unless it be *Giratz de Rousilho*, which, however, was composed in both the languages *d'oc* and *d'oïl*. He concludes that Northern France only achieved the epic form of poetry. The last epic cycle of France was that of the Crusades. Two other important cycles in France during the Middle Ages are the Breton Cycle of Celtic inspiration and the Cycle of Antiquity taken from the legendary sayings relating to Greece and Rome.

Toward the middle of the twelfth century, along with the Germanic epic, the Celtic traditions suddenly took their place and with them a new world arose—a world less barbarous and warlike. The *chanson de geste* is essentially feudal; the new saga marks a departure from feudalism. While the scene of the *chansons de geste* is in France and the neighboring coun-

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tries, that of the legends of the Breton Cycle was restricted to the lands where the Celtic dialects were spoken. Of the three branches of that dialect the Gaelic disappeared since the fourth century; the Gaelic is preserved in Ireland, Scotland, and on the Isle of Man; the Breton or Cymrie in Wales and in Brittany¹ where it was introduced by the Bretons who fled before the Saxon invasion, taking refuge in ancient Armorica. Thus the traditions were brought from England and introduced by the *trouvères*—Breton or Welsh and then French musicians—to the big and little courts of France.

The most ancient texts preserved cannot be traced back farther than about 1150, but it is certain that these were preceded by oral recitals of a much earlier period. The most ancient form in which the Breton traditions seem to have appeared is in the *lai*. The *lais* (lays) were sung by these musicians to the accompaniment of the harp, and through this channel the epic traditions of the Celts of Great Britain spread throughout France. The largest collection of lays was gathered by Marie de France and dedicated to Henry II of England, second husband of Eleanore of Aquitaine, the queen who made Breton poetry the fashion at her courts. From Marie de Champagne, daughter of Eleanore and her first husband Louis VII of France, the poet Chrestien de Troyes received the theme of his *Lancelot*,² the most brilliant versification of the Breton romances.

The Breton Cycle, called also the Arthurian or Cycle of the Round Table³ forms an immense collection to which the poets of various countries collaborated. In the most of these compositions King Arthur fills the rôle assigned to Charlemagne in the French epics. The first notice literature takes of Arthur is in a Latin chronicle by the Breton monk Nennius in the eighth century. According to common version he lived in the sixth century and was the son of Pen-

¹ This language is spoken by over a million people in Brittany to-day, of which, however, about half the number also speak French.

² Dante has given the character of *Lancelot* an important place in his *Francesca da Rimini* episode.

³ The twelve knights of King Arthur are all seated indiscriminately about the Round Table, significant of their equality.

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dragon. The last Breton king,¹ he defended England against the Picts and Scots in twelve battles, but disappeared after the last battle. The Bretons, deprived of their king, took refuge in Armorica in France, which province took from them the name of Bretagne (Brittany). Tradition has it that Arthur did not die but was taken by the enchanter Merlin and the bard Faliesin to the island of Avalon, the "Land of Eternal Youth," whence he would some day return to raise his kingdom to its former magnificence.

The poets in the age of Arthur and in the generation immediately following, celebrated the hero's exploits in brief but expressive songs; a century later the songs were developed and the legendary recital appeared. England's subjugation by the Saxons, and the overthrow of the Saxon rule by the Normans (1066), each imposed new matter on a legend already transformed; and each series of contributors wrought according to the genius of their race and the taste of the time.

The two principal sources of the subject matter of Brittany were the *Historia regum Britanniae* by Godfrey of Monmouth 1136 (published by San Marte 1854) and the *Roman de Brut* by Robert Wace. From these sources have proceeded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries an enormous quantity of poems divisible into two groups. The first, composed of poems strictly treating of the Round Table, include all those which are inspired by the love of chivalry and heroism, the principal ones being: *Lancelot*, *Merlin*, *Yvain*, *Erec*, and *Enide*,² *le Chevalier au Lion*, *Tristan de Leonnais*. The second group has a religious tendency altogether mystical, the object of which is the search for the Holy Grail. Of these the *Romance of Perceval*³ by the ancient trouvère Chrestien de Troyes is the oldest and best. It was continued by successive French versifiers to the extent of some fifty thousand verses.

¹ According to Breton tradition Arthur's court was held in Carduel in Cumberland, but a Welsh tradition has it in Carleon.

² The same legend that Tennyson used in his *Idylls of the King*.

³ The legend of *Perceval*, Welsh *Peredur* (searcher for the basin), is among the collection of Welsh tales in the *Red Book of Hergest*, a manuscript of the fourteenth century, at Jesus College, Oxford.

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Chrestien de Troyes, one of the most celebrated poets of the Middle Ages, was the greatest champion of love, chivalry, and the cult of women. One of his best works is the *Roman de Cligès* written about 1160. Cligès is in love with Fénice who returns his love, but is forced to marry his uncle Alexius, emperor of Byzantium (Constantinople). Cligès in despair seeks diversion in many adventures at the court of Arthur in Brittany. His love for Fénice, however, brings him back to Constantinople. Fénice feigning illness is given a strong sleeping potion by her nurse, and seemingly dead, is interred with great pomp in the cathedral, where during the night she elopes with Cligès. For more than a year they live in undisturbed happiness, but finally discovered and pursued by the emperor's wrath, they flee for protection to Arthur's court. Soon after the emperor dies and they return to reign in Constantinople. Tradition has it that since then the rulers of Constantinople keep their wives closely guarded.

At the end of the twelfth century, Robert de Boron in his trilogy of the Grail (*Joseph of Arimathea, Merlin, Perceval*) united the Christian legend with the Celtic traditions of the Round Table. These allegorical recitals infused with vague mysticism treat of the Grail (the old French word *greal*, Latinized *gratalis*) as the vessel used by Christ at the Last Supper, and in which Joseph of Arimathea afterwards caught the blood flowing from the side of the crucified Saviour. This precious chalice, so the legend ran, was carried to Britain where it was hidden for centuries and finally recovered by the Welsh hero Perceval. From this poem are derived subsequent forms of the legend. It is evident that they proceeded from sacerdotal influences.¹ At the same time the lay influence was exercised in the recital of the deeds done by the knights to win a sight of the Holy Grail which, it was said, insured great happiness to the possessor of perfect chastity, but vanished from sight when approached by one not perfectly pure.

¹ The legend of the Grail or Graal is said to have been suggested by the words in Matt. xxvi, 23: "*Qui intingit mecum manum in paropside hic me tradet.*" (He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish the same shall betray me.)

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One of the oldest romances of this cycle is the song of Tristan and his undying love for the fair Iseult of Ireland, wife of King Mark of Cornwall, which ends in the death of the lovers. Originally a Breton or Cornish legend of ancient and barbarous times, it became in the Middle Ages the subject of poems and romances in numerous tongues. Received by the trouvères Bérout and Thomas of the twelfth century, it had an extraordinary distribution throughout all Europe. Gaston Paris describes it as one of the finest love epics ever conceived. Eilhard von Oberge introduced this romance to German literature in the last half of the twelfth century; the great Gottfried von Strassburg left the famous epic, though unfinished, in its most classical form, and sequels were written by two later poets, the last in 1300. From this Richard Wagner drew the subject of one of his most impressive music dramas.

Godfrey of Monmouth in the *Historia regum Britanniae* writes of a strange personage—partly of Welsh tradition, partly of his own invention—the sorcerer Merlin,¹ son of a demon and a woman. Merlin figures in many romances of the Breton Cycle. His life was written in popular Latin, and his prophecies, credited indiscriminately, formed a most interesting chapter in medieval literature. They embraced, among others, that prophecy commonly applied to the infamous Isabeau of Bavaria, who betrayed France, and to Jeanne d'Arc, who saved it: "One woman will destroy France, one woman will restore her."

Merlin's love affairs with the fairy Viviane, the lady of the lake, are an interesting feature of the legend. In his wanderings in a forest in French Brittany, Merlin met the young fairy Viviane. He told her that he wrought many wonderful things. To test him, Viviane asked that he cause to appear in the forest a castle before which knights and ladies should pass. Merlin described several circles with his magic wand, and the castle appeared. Charmed with his magic, she gave her heart to him, and thereafter the magician came to see her every year for a season. But this did not satisfy her; she wished to keep him forever. So she asked

¹ In the Middle Ages Merlin became "le type de l'homme supérieur dont le génie est annihilé par les ruses d'une femme."

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him whether he knew a spell that would hold some one in an enclosure without, however, imprisoning him. For a long time he refused her this secret knowledge; but she finally drew it from him, and one day when he had fallen asleep, his head on her knees, under a blooming rosebush, she repeated the incantation he had taught her, and on awakening he became aware that he was chained forever.

The literary output of the Breton Cycle is inexhaustible. The feudal Occident—romanized, germanized, christianized—has found entertainment in it. As the French listened to the Breton harpists, their imagination was captivated by the fantastic character of the tales in which love and chivalry played so great a part. Introduced into the coarse feudalism of the North, they opened a new world to them—the world of fairies and genii, of monsters and miracles and magic.

From this poetry sprang that ideal of courteous chivalry—the protection of the weak and respect for woman. Women who rarely figure in the ancient epics are here supreme and find poetic expression: such as Morgana,¹ the fairy sister of Arthur; his wife Guinèvere,² with eyes of the “finest blue of the heavens” and who loved Lancelot of the Lake; Blanche fleur³ whose story of her love for Floire is strikingly like that of Aucassin and Nicolette; and a whole galaxy of fairy creations. And these figures are stranger, more captivating because of the novelty of their adventures and sentiments, than all the heroes of classical antiquity—than Alexander, Æneas, and Cæsar—who formed a Cycle of Rome or Antique Cycle introduced to France by the poets.

A thirteenth-century poet, John Bodel of Arras, divides those elaborate versified recitals into three classes and begins his poem *Chanson des Saisnes*,⁴ thus:

¹ One of the leading feminine characters, the heroine of the *Morte d'Arthur*, also appears in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*; introduced into Italy, the personage became popular with the Italians, who gave her name, *Fata Morgana* (fairy Morgana), to a phenomenon of mirage produced on the coast of Messina and Reggio.

² In Chrestien de Troyes's story of *Roman de la Charrette*.

³ Boccaccio used the legend in *Il Filocopo*.

⁴ *Song of the Saxons*, in which he treats of Charlemagne's wars with Guiteclin (Wittiking). Some authorities claim the authorship for Jehan Bordians.

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Ne sont que trois matères a nul homme entendant
De France, de Bretagne, et de Rome la grant.¹

The subject matter of "Great Rome," Albert tells us, embraces poems relating both to ancient and sacred history. Hector, Æneas, the heroes of the siege of Thebes, Alexander, Julius Cæsar, and Vespasian himself, are pictured in these curious compositions. They are probably the work of clerics somewhat better informed than their fellows, and possessed of a pedantry that becomes grotesque in its display, inasmuch as their knowledge of history seems a bit confused. Thus in one of these romances we see Judas Maccabeus fighting the Saracens and marrying their king's daughter—a union, we are told, from which sprung Brunehild (obit 613 A.D.), mother of Julius Cæsar. He in turn, betook himself to the court of Arthur, King of Brittany, where he married the fairy Morgana, mother of St. George and of Oberon the dwarf, who already figured in the romance of Huon of Bordeaux. There were few poetic beauties to compensate for these absurd anachronisms.

The oldest *Alexandre chanson*² in the French language composed by the cleric Simon and amplified by Lambert li Tors, Alexandre de Bernay, and Pierre de Saint-Cloud, is written in twelve syllable iambic verse, from which the famous *Alexandrine* of French poetical composition received its name. The history of the Macedonian King, Alexander the Great, is the subject of this epic of twenty-two thousand verses; its coloring, however, is not that of classic antiquity, but of the feudal times of the thirteenth century. The *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-More in which the author tells that the French are descended from the Trojans likewise reflects feudal times.

¹ There are but three kinds for any well-informed man (the epics) of France, of Brittany, and of Rome the Great.

² An earlier Alexander poem was written in the twelfth century by Alberic de Besançon, or Briançon, in the Dauphiné dialect.

CHAPTER III

FABLIAUX

POETRY, or rather, poetic literature, had up to this time been solely devoted to the upper classes represented by the great vassals. They alone were the heroes of the poems, and they alone were almost the only auditors or readers. But toward the end of the twelfth century a new public appeared. The burgher also came to hear the poems of the trouvères; and after the burgher, the rustic. Hence the necessity arose to sing not only for the kings and the powerful barons, for the prelates, priests and monks, but also for the tradesmen of the towns and the peasants of the villages. The fabliaux originated with the bourgeoisie, just about the time when that class was really established, but they were written for the amusement of all classes. In those conceived to flatter the pride of some great vassal or knight, the burgher or rustic played a ridiculous rôle. In others, on the contrary, the priest or the lord was the butt, and the rustic laughed his rude laugh. The farces related were not always in the best taste; the salt was somewhat coarse—but there was salt. The middle class also had its place in the fabliaux; and this place was generally honorable—for in that class were found the solid qualities of the race; righteousness, sincerity, economy, patriotism. Finally religion, which played such a large part in the society of the Middle Ages, has inspired a certain number of these tales—some in which we see a true elevation of spirit, and others in which the devotion is conventional.

The novel of adventure—usually a series of stories connected with the same personage—forms the transition between the epics and the fabliaux. Some of these are of original invention and some are based on national, Celtic, or Oriental traditions; as: *Robert le Diable*, *Richard sans Peur*,

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Foulke Fitz-Warin,¹ *Ille et Galeron*, *Comte d'Artois*. Another class of novels popular at this period were the *romans à tiroir*, novels which could be lengthened or shortened by the addition or the suppression of the digressional part, of which an example is the novel called *Sept Sages de Rome*.

The fabliau,² also called *conte* or *aventure*, is a popular anecdote, often satirical, but sometimes tender and touching—a short tale in verse. It is a combination of popular wisdom and malice contrived to engage both the reason and the fancy of the reader. The question of the origin and propagation of the fabliaux is a matter of discussion among eminent critics. Theodor Benfey,³ Silvestre de Sacy,⁴ Gaston Paris,⁵ Max Müller,⁶ Reinhold Koehler,⁷ all uphold the oriental theory: the great majority of fabliaux originated in a common source—India⁸—and were circulated in Europe through two intermediaries, Byzantium which had received them from Syria or Persia after their direct importation from India to those countries, and through the Arabs. The Arabs transmitted them in two ways: in Spain, by the Jews and in Syria by the crusaders who, living in intimate relationship with the Mussulman population, gathered the tales orally and transmitted them in the same manner throughout Europe. From Spain, the transmission was in a literary form and through the Jews, the cosmopolitan people *par excellence* of the Middle Ages, and the only ones who knew Arabic and could translate it into Latin.⁹

¹ The sources of the Robin Hood tales.

² *Fabel*, of which the regular plural is *fableaux*; but *fabliaux*—a form of the old Picard dialect—is upheld by many authorities; in Picardy this genre of literature was most richly developed.

³ *Pantchatantra, fünf Bücher indischer Fabeln, Märchen und Erzählungen, aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt mit Einleitung von Theodor Benfey.*

⁴ *Calila et Dimna, ou les Fables de Bidpai en arabe.*

⁵ *Littérature française au moyen-âge.*

⁶ *The migration of the Fable.*

⁷ *Aufsätze über Märchen und Volkslieder.*

⁸ Ten Brink in his *Geschichte der Englischen Literatur* also says: "Die Hauptmasse der Nouvelles des Mittelalters stammen von Indien."

⁹ *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIII et XIV siècles imprimés ou inédits, publié d'après les manuscrits, par Anatole de Montaiglon et par Gaston Raynaud.*

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The oriental theory is disputed by the celebrated savant Joseph Bédier,¹ who writes that the fabliaux were born spontaneously on all points of the globe and that it is equally impossible to determine their place of origin or their mode of propagation.

The writers of the fabliaux made no pretense to literary merit, but their *contes* have the merit of reflecting the life of the period. Some are delightful little stories well told and full of sentiment, such as *La Vair palefroi* (The Dapple-gray Horse); *Guillaume au faucon* (William with the Falcon); *Les deux changeurs* (The Two Money-changers); *Le Chevalier au Chainse* (The Knight with the Tunic.) The general characteristic of the fabliaux, however, is pleasantry, and this is indicated by the terms in which the writers themselves style them—*bourds* or *gabets* (untruths, trickery)—fit to be told after repasts to aid the digestion. In some fabliaux the pleasantry leads to obscenity and disgusting platitudes. The women are usually unfavorably depicted, sometimes as depraved, or peevish, or ruseful, and often with profound contempt. The epoch of the fabliaux, of which only one hundred and fifty have been preserved, comprises about two centuries, the oldest being Richeut (1159), and the latest by Jean de Condé (about 1340). But the majority date from the end of the twelfth century and the commencement of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth centuries. The fabliau *Richeut* is a picture of the life of a courtesan of the twelfth century, traced with great surety of touch and a surprising realism. Gaston Paris says of it: "*Richeut* reminds us of the most realistic novels of our own days, in which such masculine and such feminine types are described with relish, and we cannot refuse to recognize that this is a vein very French indeed, and altogether very different from what is called *l'esprit gaulois*, which reigns in many fables."

The French fabliaux are rather diverse in character. One finds among them the tale of devotion—the itinerary of St. Peter, the narrations of Aristæus, the reputed doings of St. Paul. In our own day Anatole France has found in them a source of inspiration, and has renewed this form of

¹ See *Les Fabliaux*, by Joseph Bédier.

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literature in a manner that denotes great talent. The subjects of the fabliaux are frequently great sinners who eventually do penance and are forgiven. We find among them the story satirizing the clergy; the story of the spendthrift; *Dit de Bérenger*¹ (the Tale of Bérenger), prototype of Molière's *George Dandin*; *La Mauvaise Femme* (the Wicked Dame); *Le Court Mantel*² (the Short Mantel)—meaning the mantle which becomes shorter or longer according to the virtue of the lady who wears it. We note, also, numberless stories of conjugal mishaps. Popular literature has drawn most liberally on the type of Bartholo in the Middle Ages. Again, we encounter the story that is merely amusing; *La Fontaine's*, *La Jeune Veuve* (The Young Widow), is taken from a fabliau by Gautier le Long, in which the young widow is almost as lively in the old text as in the most modern one.

The fabliaux treating of religion are interesting, because they show the peculiar conception the people of the Middle Ages had of religion, as for instance, the fable of the *Cour de Paradis* (Court of Paradise), a charming, but strange poem which tells of God, of the Virgin Mary, the saints and apostles dancing to a tune. In this poem the pious intention of the poet is evident. Sometimes the fabliaux disclose an artless daring, as in *Le Vilain qui Conquit le Paradis par plaid*, the villain³ who gains admission to Paradise by pleading his own cause. Thus runs the theme: A villain dies, and so occupied are the angels and demons that his unconsidered soul arises alone to the portals of heaven ere judgment has been passed. "What would you?" demands St. Peter. "Who allowed you to come here? This is not the abode of villains. Go hence!" "You are always hard as stone, St. Peter," replies the villain, "and yet it would more become you to be lenient. Pride sits with ill grace on one who has denied Christ. Behold in me a sincere and loyal man." St. Peter bears the rebuff meekly, and seeks counsel of St. Thomas, who declares that he will put the villain in his place. But when he assumes an overbearing attitude, he is promptly reminded of his lack of

¹ See Béranger's song: *Je suis vilain, vilain, vilain*.

² Also *Le Mantel mautaillié*.

³ Villain (*vilain*) was used at that time for rustic (both as noun and adjective).

faith; and so, in his confusion, he calls upon St. Paul. This good saint proves even sterner than the others. "I recognize you," says the villain, "by your intolerance. You are the same cruel tyrant at whose hands the first Christians suffered." Thereupon the three saints, equally confounded, lay the matter before the Lord, who summons the bold villain to His presence. "I have led a pure and honorable life," pleads the villain. "I have fed the hungry, I have clothed the naked, I have sheltered the homeless; I have taken Communion with a clean conscience. It is thus, we have been taught, that eternal life is gained. You know, O Lord, that I speak the truth." So the villain, after all, is admitted to Paradise.

But what does one not find in these varied and precious collections? Here an elegy full of grace and sentiment, there an idyl or an edifying tale; turn the page, and behold!—a gross buffoonery. As Albert says, "one is by turns, moved, instructed, catechised, refreshed, rejoiced, scandalized. The light and sensual mind discovers therein a nourishment to its taste; the delicate and pure soul finds food for sweet enchantment." In the fabliau of *Le Chevalier au Barizel* (the Knight with the Barrel), we see to what heights these narrators can rise. A knight black with crime is condemned by Heaven's decree to wander on the earth until he has succeeded in filling a cask pierced with many holes. In vain are his heroic endeavors to achieve this new task of the Danaïdes. Then, one day, he performs an act of Christian devotion and charity. The succored one weeps with gratitude; a tear falls into the barrel—it is filled.

Among the infinite variety of fabliaux we note a simple, didactic one that is typical of its kind. This fabliau of the *Housse Partie* (the Divided Horse-blanket) by Bernier, suggests *King Lear*. A father, having given his estate to his son at the time of the young man's marriage, becomes a burden in his old age, whereupon his ungrateful daughter-in-law conspires to drive him forth. It is cold, and the old man begs that at least he shall be provided with a garment against the weather. The unnatural son sends his own young boy to fetch the horse-blanket, and the child returns with but half of it. "Why did you cut it in two?" asks his father.

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To which the little one responds that he is keeping the other half for the day when he, too, will show his father the door. Whereupon the unnatural son repents, and full amends are made to the old man.

Many of the oldest fabliaux are revived in the later classical literature of France and other countries. Boccaccio, Chaucer, Rabelais, Molière, and La Fontaine have found the inspiration of many of their works in the old fabliaux. The fabliau of the *Vilain Mire* (The Peasant Physician) supplied Molière with the subject of his famous comedy, *Le Médecin malgré Lui* (A Physician in Spite of Himself). In this *Vilain Mire* we are introduced to a woodcutter with a young wife whom he is obliged to leave alone all day. Fearful that she may receive admirers in his absence, he devises a singular means to insure, as he fancies, her faithfulness. Every morning he beats her, and every evening he effects a reconciliation. The woman resents this peculiar device, and seeks a means of revenge. Her opportunity arrives with two strangers, who ask her to direct them to some skillful country doctor. "I know such a one," she tells them, "but he is possessed with a strange mania. He does not want to appear as a man of science, and he will not confess his skill until he has been beaten soundly." She gives them a minute description of her husband, who is cutting wood in the forest, and they go in search of him. When approached by the strangers, he does not, of course, acknowledge himself a physician, and they proceed to extract the admission by means of the good wife's formula. They tell him that the king's daughter is desperately ill, and that he will be well paid for his services. So what with the blows and the promise of money, he agrees to accompany them. When he is taken to the palace he is greatly embarrassed upon finding that the princess is in a fair way to choke to death, because of a fish bone in her throat, that no one has been able to extract. His native wit comes to his rescue. Left alone, at his request, with the princess, he makes such comical grimaces and contortions that the girl, at first astonished, presently has a laughing fit that expels the fish bone. The king heaps gifts upon him, but he is loath to let such a learned man depart until certain ailing subjects in his domain have been treated

also. The woodsman, unable to refuse, and altogether non-plused, requests, at a venture, that all the invalids be gathered together in the hall of the palace. When they are assembled, he has a fire kindled in the great chimney, and announces that the sole means of effectual cure involves a great sacrifice. The sickest one among them all must throw himself into the flames, where he will be quickly consumed. The others must then swallow his ashes, which will immediately restore them to health. The only problem is to determine which is the sickest person. In this dilemma, all the patients hasten to declare themselves well. Thereupon the amateur physician insists that they so declare themselves to the king. The monarch is delighted, and so enriches the peasant that he no longer finds it expedient to beat his wife in order that she may be occupied in his absence.

The fable (Latin, *fabula*) is also considered a spontaneous creation of the prehistoric history of the nations. There have always been fables; in the literature of every nation you will find these tales to which the imagination contributes less than is supplied by observation and the art of the narrator. The fable generally conveys a moral, though it is not always didactic throughout. The most famous are the Indian fables called Pilpay.¹ The Greek fables also trace their origin to the Orient, for Æsop (sixth century B.C.) was a Phrygian slave and he is the supposed originator² of the beast fable, called after him the Æsopic fables. Through the intermediary of the Latin compilations, of Avianus (collected from Greek fables which were called Æsop) and of Romulus (Phædrus and Byzantine fables), Æsop became very popular in the Middle Ages and it was customary to give the name *Ysopets* (little Æsops) to all collections of fables. One

¹ Pilpay, or *Bidpai*, the Arabic translation of the Pahlavi translation of the original Sanskrit *Panchatantra*, a celebrated book of fables and considered the most ancient source of fables. Benfey traces the word *Bidpai* or Pilpay to the Sanskrit *vidyapate* (in Arabic, *bidbah*), meaning master of sciences, according to which Bidpai is not the name of an individual. Vapereau's *Dictionnaire des Littératures* says "Pilpay or *Bidpay* is another name for Vishnu-Sarma, Indian (Hindoo) fabulist."

² Some of the fables attributed to Æsop were discovered in recent years by Dr. Brugsch Pascha to have been drawn from Egyptian sources which date to fourteen centuries B.C.

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of the largest and most interesting of these collections was composed by Marie de France, which she translated from an English collection.

The Ysopets were transmitted in the Middle Ages by the clerics; but independently of this there were in oral circulation "contes" of animals which differed from the fable because they offered no moral aim but only strove to be amusing. A great many of these "contes" make a point of the quarrel between the wolf and the fox, who with his finesse and subtle treachery plays him a thousand tricks to which the wolf in spite of his greater strength and ferocity invariably falls a victim. Quite a number of these tales originated with the people and were collected and put into verse by the clerics. To this collection they added other fables borrowed from antiquity or of Germanic origin, but almost all proceeded from oral transmission and not from books. This collection grew until there were twenty-six poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries forming the great beast epic of the *Roman de Renart* (The Story of the Fox). Sainte-Beuve writes: "The satirical masterpiece of the thirteenth century is the *Renart*—a production surpassing all others in its importance and popularity. It is a vast parody embracing a collection of all the gossip of the fireside. It echoes the rancor of the small against the great, and expresses the political or religious audacity of statesmen, jongleurs, monks, scholars. It is also animated with that imperious spirit against women, which is so strongly and so repugnantly emphasized in many of the fabliaux." The myth explaining the genesis of the animals in *Renart* runs:

Les Evain assauvagissoient
Et les Adam apprivoisoient.¹

which is explained thus: When God banished Adam and Eve from the earthly paradise, he gave them a miraculous rod. When Adam struck the waters of the sea with this rod, a sheep emerged, but when Eve in her turn used it, a wolf

¹ See *Le Roman de Renart*, published by E. Martin.
(Eve made them wild
Adam made them tame.)

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rushed from the waves and carried off the sheep. Adam again striking the waters, a dog appeared which pursued the wolf. Thus it continued, Adam causing to appear the gentle domestic animals, and Eve the ferocious beasts and mischief-makers.

The *Renart* in brief is an immense cycle—an epitome of the spirit of opposition; and it affords a complete picture of the Middle Ages. What seems confusion, incoherence even, is but an expression of historical truth. In the French Middle Ages, we observe a chaos of disorganized forces working to destroy themselves: the ancient world and the modern world, the Germanic traditions and the Roman traditions, the feudal rights and the communal liberties,¹ reason and faith, Church and State. All that proceeds from this chaos—morals, laws, arts, sciences, philosophy, theology—is affected by the tumult. Hence the character of the *Renart*—a gigantic creation, or rather, compilation, presenting a bizarre mixture of ignorance and erudition, of details gross, fastidious, discordant, of light and lively ebullitions. It stretches from one end of the Middle Ages to the other, gathering the inspiration of each generation, growing with the follies and the wisdom of each epoch. It is a collective work erected by the contributions of the public mind—“like those great cathedrals, now building, now stationary during centuries, on which entire generations have labored, to which thousands of artists have devoted their lives and their chisels, and then died unknown. So die the poets of the *Renart*.”

Most of the authors seem to have been clerics, only three of whom (authors of the sixteenth, twelfth, and ninth branches) are known—Pierre de Saint-Cloud, Richard de Lison, a Norman trouvère and an abbot of La Croiz in Brie:

Uns prestres de la Croiz en Brie
A mis son estude et s'entende
A fere une novele branche
De Renart qui tant sot de gauche.²

¹ Louis XI, the greatest tyrant, abolished serfdom.

² A priest of La Croiz in Brie employed his learning and intelligence in making a new version of Renart which knew so many tricks.

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In these poems we are introduced to animals with human characters—some of which bear artificial names and others the names in familiar speech. To begin with Renart: this is the animal known in French as *renard* (fox), but which the Middle Ages knew as *goupil*. Renart was a proper name used by the poets, and the poems became so popular that *Renart* was substituted for the true or primitive one. In all these poems the *goupil* appears under the name of Renart—together with the wolf, Ysengrin; the lion, Noble; the bear, Brun; the cock, Chantecler; the leopard, Firapel; the stag, Brichemer; the ass, Bernart; the cat, Tyber; the vulture, Escoffle; the badger, Grimbert; the monkey, Cointériaux; the sheep, Belin; etc., nearly all, beginning with Ysengrin, the victims of the astute Renart. This ingenious transformation of individualizing the heroes and giving them proper names is supposed to have originated in Northern France in the eleventh century.

The most important branch and the masterpiece of the collection is the *Judgment of Renart*¹: After having been summoned thrice in vain, Renart is brought before the tribunal of the king of animals—Noble, the lion. Accused of many misdemeanors, this intrepid scorner of the law is convicted and condemned to die. The king has a scaffold erected to punish Renart in view of the whole court, but the sly fellow steps before the throne with downcast and penitent mien, confesses all his sins and promises as a penance to make a pilgrimage across the sea to the Holy Land. The king, greatly touched, grants this favor. One of the finest episodes of the ancient *Renart* is the master rascal's adventures with Chantecler, the cock. In this encounter wits are well matched, and Renart learns a lesson.

The first poems or *branches* were characterized by a natural and simple style with nothing of the satirical: a pleasant parody of society. But gradually coarseness, satire and allegory were introduced until all semblance of the original idea was lost and incoherence abounded. Finally, satire alone under a thin disguise marked the last sequels in *Le*

¹ From this branch proceeded the poem of *Reinaert de Vos* in Flemish, which was the source of Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*.

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Couronnement de Renart, second half of the thirteenth century; *Renart le Nouveau* by Jacquemard Gelée, of Lille, in 1288, and in *Renart le Contrefait* by an unknown author from Troyes in the commencement of the fourteenth century. A French writer calls it a comic-heroic epic which surpasses in grandeur and power the works of Æsop and of Phædrus, and recalls by its spontaneity the Indian fable, as it announces in parts the finesse of La Fontaine.

The chansons de geste were always sung as long as they flourished, but with the introduction of the romance in verse and prose came the custom of recital. Although the professional *conteurs* were obliged to determine upon some definite form for their stories, these were not written and consequently they were lost except a *cante-fable* (or chante-fable), *Aucassin et Nicolette*, written in the twelfth century, partly in prose, partly in verses (hence the name) of seven syllables with assonance. This charming and idyllic love story by an unknown author said to have lived in the time of Louis VII (1130), has been admirably translated into English by Andrew Lang. There are two other notable translations by F. W. Bourdillon and Laurence Housman. Whoever the author was, he was a true poet and a consummate artist, for he wove a story in the alternate prose and verse of the cante-fable that is immortal with the dewy freshness of youth.

The story tells how Aucassin, the only son of Count Garin of Beaucaire, falls in love with a captive Paynim maiden, Nicolette, who had been sold to the captain-at-arms of Beaucaire. The father vainly tries to cure his son of his infatuation, and finally throws Aucassin in prison and determines to have Nicolette made away with. Nicolette escapes and builds herself a bower in a forest, where she is discovered by Aucassin after his release from prison. Together the lovers take flight by ship and are borne to a strange country, the country of the King of Torelore. But the Saracens descend upon Torelore and both Aucassin and Nicolette are taken captive. They are placed on different ships and become separated in a storm. Aucassin finally makes his way back to Beaucaire after an absence of three years and finds that his parents are dead; so he succeeds his father as Count of Beaucaire.

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Nicolette is taken to Carthage, and is discovered to be the long-lost daughter of the reigning king. Her father tries to marry her to another Paynim king, so she steals away and takes up her abode in a seaport town. After a time she disguises herself as a harper by staining her face and attiring herself in male garb. With viol in hand she sails away in a ship, and after much wandering comes at last to Provence and makes her way through the country till she comes to the castle of Beaucaire. In the disguise of the harper she sings a song to Aucassin of the love of Aucassin and Nicolette, and he eagerly questions her, for he has never ceased to think of "*Nicolette, ma très douce mie, que je tant aim.*"¹ He is then told all about the adventures of Nicolette, and how she was a daughter of the King of Carthage. Aucassin begs the supposed harper to go in quest of her, and Nicolette promises that soon she will bring his love to him. She rests for eight days, removes the stain from her face and clothes herself in rich silks. Then she sends for Aucassin, and the happily united lovers fall into each other's arms and are wedded on the following day. This in brief is one of the most charming stories that has been told in any age.

Such are the tales whose origin, according to Gaston Paris, is lost in the buried past of India—tales lovely, mocking, shocking, simple, complex; tales proceeding through many mediums from the fatherland of Buddha to the world of Mohammed, thence passing westward into the communities of Picardy and France, and floating with the current of popular tradition to swell the ever-quickenning stream of literature.

Many of the *fabliaux* are concerned with persons and themes borrowed from ancient literature: we meet Narcissus, Pyramus, and Thisbe, the story of Aristotle. The authors of most of these stories are unknown. The names of certain writers of *fabliaux* have been preserved—among them those of Gautier le Long, Jean Bodel, Jacques of Baisieux, Jean the Gaul of Aubespierre, and Rutebeuf, one of the most talented and versatile writers of the thirteenth century who wrote a series of fables satirizing the times. Like the epic song, like the lyric poems of the South, the *fabliaux* have had their European influence—an influence just as great as that

¹ Nicolette, my sweet lady, whom I love so well.

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of the lyrics and the epics, principally in Italy, Germany, and England: Boccaccio, Ariosto, Heinrich Glichezare, and Chaucer are among those who borrowed from this treasure lore. This genre of literature disappeared in the fifteenth century and its place was taken by the novel and the farce. But through the Italians it returned to France and was renewed in the works of Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, the incomparable La Fontaine and others. Petit de Julleville says the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries belong to the fabliau, and the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the farce; the second was but a transformation of the first, put into dialogue, for the principle of the two genres is perceptibly the same.

Popular poetry was not always narrative. Often it was didactic or satirical; or, in the absence of any strongly defined character, it was, for lack of a better definition, what is commonly called "light" poetry. Again, the people of the Middle Ages were very fond of knowledge and instruction, and of putting into a single book all they knew and all they wished to teach others. The poems so compiled were called *Bibles*—a title meant to indicate, it would seem, that they contained nothing but truths. The *Bible* of Guyot de Provins is a universal satire, but is particularly directed against the pope, the cardinals, and the higher clergy. Guyot is the "Rabelais of the thirteenth century, but with less talent." The *Bible* of Hugues de Berzy belongs in the same class, but it is less satirical.

"Poetry of circumstance" in the Middle Ages was variously entitled Sayings (*Dits*), Disputes, Debates, Disputations, Battle, Legacies (*Legs*), Testaments, Reveries, Medleys (*Fatraisies*). The Testaments or Legacies begin at the end of the thirteenth century. These are curious compositions in which the poet, representing himself as dying, makes ironical bequests to the objects of his irony. Such is the form which the so-called *Mémoires* assume in the Middle Ages.

As all human creations are evolved, and do not spring complete from the head of one man—as Pallas Minerva from the head of Jove; so the unique *Roman de la Rose* had a prehistoric existence in the French literary consciousness before Guillaume de Lorris gave it its final form, and

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Jean de Meung supplied the sequel. To this extraordinary product of the French mind—the Romance of the Rose—Gustave Lanson has devoted a preliminary chapter dealing with its place in didactic and moral literature.

Between the periods of lyric and of narrative poetry, there arises a considerable body of didactic verse of a truly moral character. In view of the national French nature as expressed in the middle classes, it could not well be otherwise. French literature could not remain indefinitely isolated from serious reflection and philosophic thought, or indefinitely given over to haphazard sensation and the caprices of the imagination and fancy. The spirit of the laity could not remain always closed to the science of the clerics. At first the laity were strangers to that powerful movement of ideas proceeding from the schools and convents from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries—a movement chiefly registered in the great Latin and scholastic thirteenth-century works, the *Speculum Majus* of Vincent de Beauvais, the *Summa Theologia* of St. Thomas Aquinas, the *Opus Majus* of Roger Bacon. The auditors of *Roland* and of *Renart* did not trouble themselves much about universal ideas and principles. Their religion caused them to fast on Lenten days, and to open their purses to the church and to the poor; but it did not inspire them to reflect on the Trinity or on the relation between soul and body. They were children who loved to listen only to stories. But gradually the curiosity of these children awoke. Kings, princes, and lords, having received, for that time, a superior education, observed the popular interest in these clerical studies; the clerics, on their part, wishing to extend the sphere of their influence, communicated something of the science which until then the Latin language had kept hidden from the knowledge of the populace. In some way, learned literatures began to filter into popular literature. From the twelfth century on we see all kinds of didactic works (didactic, of course, in the unscientific manner of the medieval, though erudite mind) finding their way into French—works on natural history, physics, medicine, morality, philosophy; books on cookery and etiquette.

Among the most ancient scientific writings in the vulgar

language we find the *Bestiaires* (from the Latin *bestia*, beast), the *Lapidaires* (from the Latin *lapis*, *idis*, precious stone), and the *Volucraires* (from the Latin *volucris*, bird)—compilations of miraculous and puerile stories concerning beasts and birds and precious stones, which disclose a “science” more fantastic, more stupendous, than all the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table—productions all the more extravagant because the description of natural things is mixed with allegorical moralities. The Middle Ages was the epoch, par excellence, of allegory; in each animal, the people seemed to see the vices and virtues of men, and to point a moral in their descriptions of them. The two most celebrated *Bestiaires* of French literature are the *Bestiaire d’Amour*, of Richard de Fournival of Amiens, and the *Bestiaire divin* of Guillaume, cleric of Normandy. The *Lapidaires* in the Middle Ages were treatises on the pretended curative or preservative qualities of precious stones. The most popular of the *Lapidaires* was that of Marbode, Bishop of Rennes (twelfth century), who took his material from a Greek original, and whose work was translated several times into French in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. A French critic tells us that the study of these three forms of literature with their symbolical allegories is absolutely necessary for a comprehension of the Middle Ages. Other *Lapidaires* and other *Bestiaires* followed, attesting the success of the literary genre and the scientific ineptitude of the readers.

From the twelfth century the lay public was enabled to read, in Anglo-Norman, Boethius’s *De Consolatione*—a fundamental work of scholastic science, and a classic commented upon in the schools up to the time of the Renaissance. Later, Aristotle’s *Ethics* was translated. The principal parts of the Bible and the evangelistic works were also translated, or imitated, first in verse, and then in prose; and to such an extent that the church was sometimes alarmed to observe the sources of her dogma too liberally opened to the bold ignorance of the laity. The spirit of lay society was further modified by the sermons in vulgar or popular language delivered from the pulpits, from the ninth and tenth centuries. The *Débat de l’Ame et du Corps* (Debate of the

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Body and the Soul), which is found both in Latin and in French after the first third of the twelfth century, affords a general view of Christian morality, with its vigorous arraignment of the body as an instrument for the debasement and damnation of the soul. Moral literature, as one may easily understand, often turns to satire; and the exceedingly vivid description of the actual world, and of man's ordinary occupations and inclinations, sometimes found in these moral works, lends them a peculiar flavor. The thirteenth century was also the century of allegories. Allegory in the literature of the Middle Ages presents itself under three aspects: First, as a philosophical method of interpreting the phenomena of nature; second, as the abstracting process of the mind which embodies itself in the rhetorical figure of personification; third, as a specific form of poetry.¹ In this species of literature distinction was attained by Raoul de Houdan, with his *La Voie du Paradis*² (The Way to Paradise), his *Ailes de la prouesse*³ (Wings of Prowess), and his strange *Songe d'Enfer* (Dream of Hell), wherein he feasts with good appetite at the table of Lucifer in company with fat usurers and hoary sinners.

Allegory reached its greatest popularity in the famous *Roman de la Rose*, an allegorical and didactic poem inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and his *De Arte amandi*. The author in the first part of the poem calls upon Macrobius to witness that dreams are not always deceptive.⁴ The *Roman de la Rose* is the "art of love put into action and inclosed in the setting of a dream." In spite of its continuity as fiction, it is really two distinct works which belong neither to the same time nor to the same author; nor do they breathe the same spirit. Of the 22,817 verses as found in Fr. Michel's edition, the first 4,669 were composed about 1237 by a young cleric of Orleans, Guillaume de Lorris; the

¹ See Courthope's *History of English Poetry*.

² Disputed by F. Zenker (*Ueber die Echtheit zweier dem Raoul von Houdenc zugeschriebener Werke*).

³ Called also *Le Roman des Ailes*.

⁴ Alluding to Macrobius's *Commentary of Cicero's Dream of Scipio* (*Commentarius ex Cicerone in somnium Scipionis*, generally known as *In somnium Scipionis expositio*).

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remaining verses were written some forty years later by another cleric of Orleans, Jean Clopinel de Meung. There is nothing more unlike indeed than the two poems and the two poets. The one poet, a delicate spirit, ingenious and full of mannerisms, wrote to please polite society; the other—a sharp, violent, cynical genius—hurled stinging words at the superstitions and beliefs of the times. Guillaume de Lorris sets forth the chivalrous, religious and sentimental mysticism of the preceding age. He sums up with pretentious erudition all the amorous metaphysics of his time as the beginning of his poem announces:

Ci est le Roman de la Rose
Où l'Art d'Amors est tote enclose.¹

The second part of the *Roman de la Rose* announces in its spirit the arrival of a new society. A distinct work of its own, it is yet less a continuation than a counterpart of that of de Lorris. From the midst of insipid sentimentalities there proceeded the liveliest, the boldest, and sometimes the most brutal invectives against the times. It is no longer the art of love but an encyclopedia of bitter satire. The bizarre mixture of mystic tenderness, chivalrous gallantry and love, is followed by an overflow of unbridled sensuality, a seditious emancipation of the flesh from the spirit, in which Jean de Meung with scholastic subtlety launched forth into political and satirical dissertations against beliefs, superstitions and the monachal institutions. The love idyl became a political pamphlet. The women he held in the profoundest contempt and heaped most cruel insults upon them with bold and cynical expression.

The scene of the poem unfolds in a dream and in spring-time—a double allegory which in itself reveals the spirit of the whole work. The contents may be summed up briefly as follows: the poet or author who calls himself *Amant* (lover) dreams that he sees a transparent palace surrounded by trees and beautiful gardens, illumined by a roseate light—the

¹ This is the story of the Rose,
Where the art of love is all inclosed.

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dwelling of *Déduit* (Love's Pleasure). The gate is opened for him by *Oyseuse* (Idleness) and he meets a series of impalpable and very symbolic phantoms: *Beauté* (Beauty), *Doux-Regard* (Sweet glances), *Richesse* (Riches), *Dieu d'Amour* (God of love), *Jeunesse* (Youth), etc. In this magic garden *Amant* sees on a rosebush a Rose of fascinating beauty, surrounded, however, by thorny hedges which he could never have penetrated without the aid of *Bel-Accueil* (Good-Reception). Finally, he succeeds with the help of *Bel-Accueil* in kissing the Rose, for which the Rose and *Bel-Accueil* are incarcerated and *Amant* is in despair. Here Guillaume de Lorris stops and fifty years later Jean de Meung continues and introduces two new characters: *Dame Nature* and *Faux-Semblant* (False Appearance). A third actor, *Dame Raison*—Reason—already employed by de Lorris, but now enlarged and transformed, occupies likewise a large place in this poem. *Raison* consoles *Amant* and *Ami* shows him how to reach the goal. (Here Jean de Meung holds dissertations on friendship, the golden age, and the origins of society.) This road is called *Trop-Donner* (Give too much) and *Amant* cannot pass. (Discourse on the infidelity of woman, and against marriage. Jean de Meung advocated woman's rights and free love.) Now comes *Dieu d'Amour* with his twenty-four companions: *Noblesse de Cœur* (Nobility of Heart), *Beauté*, *Jeunesse*, etc., and these supported by Nature and Genius take possession of the tower where the Rose is imprisoned. *Amant* plucks the Rose—then day breaks and the poet awakes. In this latter part, Jean de Meung launches forth into diatribes against the monks and celibacy. The poem concludes with the following verse:

Explicit li Rommans la Rose;
Où l'art d'Amors est toute enclose:
Nature rit, si com moi semble;
Quant hic et hæc joignent ensemble.¹

¹ Here ends the Romance of the Rose,
In which the whole art of Love is inclosed;
Nature smiles, if she resembles me,
When this and that come together.
(Love) (Nature)

FABLIAUX

Lenient writes of the *Roman de la Rose*: this artificial product of the French mind—laden with illuminations sometimes graceful, but often shocking and contradictory—preserved its popularity and its splendor till the renaissance of letters. From Homer to Dante, no poem has so aroused the interest of men; none has caused more controversies and commentaries. To what, then, did it owe this singular vogue? First of all, to love—for love was the dominant passion in the Middle Ages; and, in the second place, to satire. To graft satire on gallantry, Juvenal on Ovid, is a bizarre idea, without doubt, yet it gratified the two most prevalent French passions, slander and love. Nature, in this poem, is no less boastful and learned than Reason. If she has read history less, she knows, on the other hand, the secret of things. She takes it upon herself to explain to us the origin of the world, the movement of the stars, the succession of animal life. All these revelations—compounded of reminiscences of Utopian ideas, agitated in the schools of Greece and Alexandria, and overlaid with the biblical traditions—produced a marvelous effect upon the contemporary imagination. They unquestionably confirmed the notion that Jean de Meung—the most learned man of his century, even in the judgment of the great Gerson¹—had hidden away in his work the secret of the philosopher's stone. This free-thinker of the fourteenth century refuted popular opinion on the influence of the comets. He did not believe that their appearance announced the death of a prince or some other great personage—for the body of a king, when he is dead, did not differ from that of a cart driver:

Car leur cors ne vaut une pome
Plus que li cors d'un charetier
Ou d'un clerc ou d'un escuyer.²

Three centuries later, in the reign of Louis XVI, Bayle, writing his *Thoughts* on the comet and ridiculing popular

¹ Jean Charlier, called Jean de Gerson (1353–1429), theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris.

² For their corpses are not worth one apple more than the body of a carter or of a cleric or of a groom.

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prejudice, performed an act of boldness to which the intimidated genius of Bernouilli humbly bowed. That daring, violent, even cynical naturalism, bravely diffused through the work of Jean de Meung, connects him, despite difference of time, with the philosophers of the eighteenth century. In this respect one may consider him as a true ancestor of Jean Jacques Rousseau; like him, he is an apostle of instincts and passion; like him, he plies the biting anger of the misanthrope, swells with the rebellious aspirations of the tribune, the noisy and inflamed rhetoric of the pamphleteer; like him, finally, he mingles with the recital of a romantic adventure those long, moralizing dissertations in which Nature and Reason delight, and which Saint-Preux and Julie in Jean Jacques's *Nouvelle Héloïse* do not disdain. The political boldness of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*, the menacing doubts of the *Discours sur l'inégalité des Conditions* are already contained in embryo in the *Roman de la Rose*. The origins of society, of royal power, of tithes and taxes, of property itself—all is put in question by Jean de Meung. Voltaire seemed to shake the throne of Louis XV with his famous verse. “*Le premier qui fut roi fut un soldat heureux*”¹ (“the first who was king was a fortunate soldier”). Jean de Meung is quite differently energetic and brutal in his attitude toward royalty, of which he is, however, the servant and ally:

Ung grant vilain entr’eus eslurent;
Le plus ossu de quan quil furent
Le plus corsu et le greignor.
Si le firent prince et seignor.
Cil jura qu’adroit les tendroit
Et que lor loges deffendrait.²

This audacious pamphleteer, this friend of the University, this enemy of popes and monks, wore himself the frock of

¹ The allusion being to Merowig, first Merovingian monarch, who derived his kingship from the people.

² They elected a tall villain (rustic) among them, the boniest that there was, the stoutest and the tallest, and made him prince and lord. He swore that he would skillfully protect them, and would defend their dwellings.

FABLIAUX

the preaching friar; he lived rich, powerful, tranquil, honored; and was buried with great pomp in the cloister of the Jacobins.

Unfortunately, says Lanson, Jean de Meung has not, like Dante, created a form which would have insured to his thought the eternity of beauty. He failed to be a great artist. The most apparent and usual beauties of art are wanting in his work; he cares nothing about the science of composition, proportion, propriety. This *Roman de la Rose* is a jumble, a chaos, a strange tissue of the most unrelated subjects. Digressions, parentheses of five hundred verses, cost him no qualms. The work is a sequence of pieces which cling together as they may, and which follow each other sometimes without joining. Yet in spite of its incoherence, the entire poem gives the impression of something vigorous and powerful. This buoyancy of ideas and arguments, poured forth incessantly in eighteen thousand verses, without pause, without rest; the fervor and flow of style—exact, incisive, efficacious; the precision of demonstration; the most complicated and subtle exposition; the robust alacrity with which the poet carries an enormous burden of facts and reasonings; the movement which, in spite of inevitable languor here and there, imposes upon the whole the confused yet fruitful mass of scholastic erudition and boldly original inventions—all this imparts to the work a somewhat vulgar force which, nevertheless, is not without beauty. He closes worthily the Middle Ages with a masterpiece which restores them and destroys them at the same time. By his philosophy, which consists essentially of the identity and the sovereignty of Nature and Reason, he is the first link of the chain connecting Rabelais, Montaigne, Molière—to which Voltaire also is attached, and even, in certain respects, Boileau.

The sphere of the influence of the *Roman de la Rose* may be measured by the vast literature which has been amassed on this production in France and in all countries where Romance literature is cherished. There are more than one hundred and fifty manuscripts of this allegory, sixty-seven of which are in the National Library in Paris. It was the subject of innumerable attacks: Gerson, one of the most bitter denouncers, wrote one hundred years after its completion:

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Arrachez, hommes sages, arrachez ce livre dangereux des mains de vos fils et de vos filles. Si je possédais un seul exemplaire du *Roman de la Rose*, et qu'il fût unique, valût-il mille livres d'argent—je le brûlerais plutôt que de le vendre pour le publier tel qu'il est. Si je savais que l'auteur n'eût pas fait pénitence, je ne prierais jamais pour lui, pas plus que pour Judas; et les personnes qui lisent son livre à mauvais dessein, augmentent ses tourments, soit qu'il souffre en enfer, soit qu'il gémissé en purgatoire.¹

At the same time Christine de Pisan defended her sex against the calumnies of Jean de Meung in her *Lettres sur le Roman de la Rose*. But the poem found its defenders in the learned doctors and magistrates of high rank. Its popularity was so great that the priests cited quotations from it just as they did from the Bible. When printing was introduced it was published several times, and Marot made a modernized edition which was popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Later editions were made by Méon in 1814 and F. Michel in 1864.

Gaston Paris writes: For a long time, and this was a grave error, the *Roman de la Rose* was regarded as an opening in French literature; in reality it opened one period and closed another. The spontaneous, unconscious, almost infantine dream of the Middle Ages ended, or only reappeared in transient intervals; modern literature, whose essential elements are philosophical thought and knowledge of antiquity made its début.

¹ Tear, wise men, tear this dangerous book from the hands of your sons and daughters. If I possessed only one copy of the *Romance of the Rose*, and it was the only one, valued at a thousand livres, I would sooner burn it than sell it for publication, such as it is. If I knew that the author had not done penance, I would no more pray for him than for Judas; and the persons who read his book with an evil object increase his torments whether he suffer in hell or groan in purgatory.

CHAPTER IV

CHRONICLES AND HISTORY

THE first interesting chronicle in France was written by Grégoire de Tours. The famous *Chronicle of Turpin*, a legendary history of Charlemagne and Roland also in Latin dates from the eleventh century. It was falsely attributed to Archbishop Turpin, but recent researches proved that the authors were two monks in Spain. Although a fable and full of anachronisms this history was considered a great authority and inspired the songs of many of the trouvères.

Suger—Minister under Louis VII and Abbot of Saint Denis—caused to be gathered in his abbey all the known Latin chronicles that had been collected in the first centuries of national history, together with all the registers in which every convent transcribed the facts of local and general history. With these documents as a basis, the great *Chronicles of France* or *Chronicles of Saint Denis* were compiled. They begin by telling that the French are descended from the Trojans—Francus, son of Hector, having come to establish himself in Gaul, with a colony, at the same time that his compatriot, Æneas, settled in Italy and became the progenitor of the Romans. The history of the earlier succeeding centuries is treated somewhat in the same fashion, and when the editor had the choice of a simple narration by an historian or the embellished story of a legend, he never hesitated: he always chose the legend. About 1174 Garnier de Pont-Sainte-Maxence wrote the *Vie de Saint Thomas de Cantorbéry*, four years after the hero's death. It is one of the oldest works written in the language of the Ile-de-France, as it is also one of the most remarkable historical poems of the Middle Ages.

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These chronicles mostly written in Latin and relating chiefly to foreign events were not therefore typically French. French history proper dated from the Crusades. The events which took place in the Holy Land under the French Crusades, were of necessity recorded and transmitted to the people in France. At first these histories were in verse, epic form, but with Villehardouin's nine years' history of the fourth French Crusade, French prose history was born. Thenceforth every work which employed epic verse as a medium for historical facts was accidental and, as it were, a step backward in the development of this branch of literature. Fourteenth-century poems, like the *Combat des Trente*¹ (Combat of the Thirty) and the *Life of Bertrand du Guesclin* are but sterile records in literary history.

The development of prose during four centuries, from the twelfth to the fifteenth, is strikingly illustrated by a typical historical work of each century: Geoffroi de Villehardouin's *De la Conquête de Constantinople*, the oldest French historical work; Jean de Joinville's *Histoire de Saint-Louis*; Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*; and Philippe de Commines' *Mémoires*. Geoffroi de Villehardouin, born at the Château de Villehardouin in Champagne about 1160, was at first Maréchal of Champagne and later of Roumelia. His *Mémoires* are the account of that extraordinary expedition, whose object was the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, and which resulted in the taking of Constantinople and the establishment of a French empire in the East. Villehardouin was the real promoter of the crusade. His works at first were influenced by the chansons de geste in regard to form and color, but later he definitely disengaged history from the epic which had at that time degenerated into romance. He took hold of living events of which he himself had been an eyewitness, and recorded them without recourse to his imagination. The

¹ A poem on the battle fought in 1350 at Ploermel between thirty Bretons and thirty English, under the command of Beaumanoir. Of its three hundred verses by an unknown poet, a clever imitator of the old trouvères, this famous verse has been retained:

Bois ton sang, Beaumanoir,
La soif te passera.

Drink your own blood, Beaumanoir,
To relieve your thirst.

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details, precise and characteristic, are an invaluable study of the manners and customs of the epoch.

Nearly a century elapsed between the memoirs of Villehardouin and those of Joinville, during which French culture was given a decided impetus by a great king and a great pope, Louis IX and Innocent III. Jean de Joinville was born about 1224 at the castle of Joinville, Châlons-sur-Marne, and educated at the courts of Provins and Troyes—two old cities of Champagne, at that time the abiding place of the masters of the *Gaie Science*.¹ At the call of the King of France, Joinville sold all his property, equipped ten cavaliers and accompanied Louis IX on his first crusade. After the death of Louis, Joinville lived to see two succeeding reigns and the beginning of a third. It was at the request of the queen, wife of Louis le Hutin, that he dictated his *Mémoires*, when he was more than ninety years old. He died in the beginning of the fourteenth century. Nisard writes: "Joinville has in common with Villehardouin the character of a Christian knight: the courage, the straightforwardness, the virtues of chivalry, without its illusions—a simple faith, free from clerical rule and without theological refinement. Joinville's disputations with the founder of the Sorbonne, in the presence of Louis IX, who acted as judge between his seneschal and his chaplain, carry us to regions of thought and meditation far beyond that epoch of action and adventure."

The foundation of the aforementioned Sorbonne was an event of great significance in its influence on French literature and learning. It was a famous school of theology founded by Robert de Sorbon² in 1250, as a branch of the University of Paris, to assist poor theological students. The college became one of the most celebrated in the world and still exists as such. Before the revolution of 1789—during the progress of which it was suppressed—the Sorbonne was

¹ *Gaie Science*, or *Gai Savoir*, is the name given to the poetry of the trouvères and troubadours.

² Robert de Sorbon, or Sorbonne, was born at Sorbon, a little village near Rheims, in 1201. After receiving his degree as Doctor of Theology in Paris, he devoted himself to lectures, and acquired so great a reputation that St. Louis wished to hear him, and eventually chose him for his confessor.

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one of the four divisions of the Faculty of theology in Paris. It produced so many able theologians that its name was given to the entire faculty, and the students took the title of Doctors and Bachelors of the Sorbonne, even though they were not members of this college. Upon the reconstruction of the University under Napoleon I, the building erected for it by Richelieu, and still called the Sorbonne, was ceded to the city of Paris, on condition that the theological faculty in connection with the faculties of science and belles-lettres should remove there.

The University of Paris¹ had been founded by bulls of Innocent III, in the years 1208, 1209, 1213, by the reunion of the Schools of Logic of la Montagne Sainte Geneviève, and the School of Theology of the Cloisters of Notre Dame; so that it had actually existed before its official foundation, and by this foundation it was simply more strongly concentrated and organized. The schools of Paris were, since the eleventh century, extremely flourishing, and were a light for the whole of Europe. After the year 1208, the University was constituted in a regular manner. It was composed of four faculties: of theology, of canon law, of medicine, and of arts. The last named embraced what may be called secondary instruction—from the third department as far as philosophy—and with an advanced course, from baccalaureate to doctorate. Logic was made the chief study. All the teaching was oral, and with infinite discussions. The career of the student was as follows. After a first examination he was proclaimed *déterminant*;² after a second examination, *licencié*—and that qualified him for teaching; after a third examination, *maître ès-arts* (Master of Arts)—and then he was a professor of the faculty; finally, after still another examination, he received the degree of *docteur*. The Sorbonne branch of the University

¹ A great number of provincial universities were founded in France in imitation of the University of Paris. Among them were Angers, Toulouse, founded 1229, and especially conspicuous in the fourteenth century; Montpellier, Avignon, Cahors, Grenoble, Orléans, Poitiers, Caen, Bourges.

² At the end of the fifteenth century the term *déterminant* was changed to *bachelier* (bachelor). During the Middle Ages *bachelier* meant a candidate for knighthood and was therefore a title relating to the nobility and not to the University.

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of Paris¹ soon became a faculty of theology of the greatest importance; it was truly a "light, guide, and judge" for the Church of France. A "Permanent Council," Bossuet called it; a judge also of books, and books sometimes most foreign to its teachings. These were submitted to it by the authorities for a decision as to whether they contained anything contrary to the religion of the State. Thus it was at the same time a Permanent Council and a Congregation of the Index—titles that made it most redoubtable. To return to its position in the Middle Ages: it was at that time a school of religion, of law, and of a philosophy that was very subtle and ingenious and at times very profound. It created theologians and orators with dialectics concise and captious, and very skillful diplomats. That is why so many celebrated diplomats of the Middle Ages, and even of more modern times, were priests. Theology and scholarship were marvelous means by which to fortify, make supple, and sharpen men's minds—always provided their intellects were strong enough to support this rigorous discipline.

Jean Froissart, born at Valenciennes in Hainault about the year 1337, was the son of a painter of coats-of-arms. He was a churchman—in fact, a good canon, who had even, for some time, been a curé. Nevertheless, his history and his poems, as he himself says, are recitals only of war and love. He traveled in order to write history. According to Villemain, perhaps it might be said more truthfully that Froissart became an historian in order to travel. He set out for England, where he was warmly welcomed by the lords and ladies and where the queen, Philippa de Hainault, wife of Edward III, became his patroness. As her protégé he composed love poems, but his great Chronicle was always uppermost, and the favor of princes enabled him to travel and improve his mind. He visited Scotland, at that time an unknown country. He approached familiarly Edward, Prince of Wales (the Black Prince), and the great man of his century. He followed to Milan the Duke of Clarence, who went there to marry the daughter of Galeazzo II.

¹ Since 1896 the University of Paris has five branches: law, literature, the sciences, medicine, and theology (Sorbonne branch).

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After the death of Queen Philippa, he returned to his own country, and was appointed curé of Lestines, in the diocese of Cambrai. This office he discharged but a short time, returning to the more agreeable court life, and attaching himself to Wenceslas, Duke of Brabant, a generous prince who made verses. Froissart served him as secretary and poet; he retouched the verses of the duke, mingled his own with them, and united all in a romance entitled *Méliador*, or, the *Knight of the Golden Sun*. Froissart himself has told of his reception at the court of England, and how he presented his romance of *Méliador* to Richard II. This work is a history, almost universal in treatment, of the States of Europe from the year 1322 to the end of the fourteenth century. Sometimes, by happy contrasts, adroit transitions, he related his own adventures along with historical facts. Froissart's whole genius lies in his ability to tell a story; and he tells it well. No man had seen more countries; above all, no man had seen them to better purpose. In the intervals of his voyages, and even in the course of his excursions, he wrote the chronicle of his time, and made verses. These were *lais*, *virelais*, *rondeaux*, and little poems—gallant, sentimental, or allegorical. The titles embrace: *Li Horloge Amoureuse* (The Horologe of Love); *Li Débat du Cheval et du Lévrier* (The Dispute between the Horse and the Greyhound); *Li Trettié de l'Épinette Amoureuse* (The Story of the Love Coop); *Li Trettié du Joli Buisson de Jonèce* (The Story of the Pleasing Grove of Youth); *Le Paradis d'Amour*, etc. Freshness, grace, color—above all, naturalness—are what one finds in these amiable reveries. Froissart died about 1405 and Enguerrand de Monstrelet wrote a continuation of his "chronicles," comprising the years 1400 to 1444. This chonicle, although a faithful report of events,¹ is tiresome and wordy; which called forth the criticism of Rabelais: "Ce long narré est plus baveux qu'un pot à moustarde."²

An author's superiority consists in being, at once, of his time and out of his time; in expressing the thoughts of his contemporaries, and in having an individual expression of

¹ Monstrelet was in Compiègne when Jeanne d'Arc was taken prisoner.

² This long narrative is more slabbering than a mustard-pot.

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his own. Such an author was Philippe de Commines, and according to Villemain, the most original French writer of the fifteenth century, because in addition to the naïveté of this period, he was endowed with the mental stability of another epoch. In his *Mémoires* one perceives a resemblance, in form and detail, to the romance of chivalry; at the same time there is disclosed a mind, serious and solid, that sees through all ruses, and judges with marvelous insight, the character, the form, and the objects of governments. Commines's work in marking the progress achieved by reason, government, and the art of living in the fifteenth century, exhibits the perfection of a recital at once judicious and naïve. To a talent for story-telling is united political sagacity. Commines was the confidant, the historian, and the panegyrist of Louis XI, whose political astuteness and ability he has pictured with supreme expression and intelligence.

The condemnation merited by Louis XI, says Augustin Thierry, and of which the future will not absolve him, rests on the blame the human conscience attaches to the memory of those who have believed that all means are good in imposing upon facts the yoke of ideas. During Charles VIII's reign, Commines was imprisoned for eight months at Loches, in one of the famous hanging cages called *fillettes du roi*, devised by Louis XI (also ascribed to Cardinal La Balu, one of the first to be "caged"). Later he was recalled to the favor of Charles VIII, served him as chamberlain, and accompanied him on the expedition leading to the conquest of Naples. During Louis XII's reign, he remained in the good graces of that king until his death.

Alain Chartier (1390-1449), preceding Commines, earned the sobriquet of Father of French Eloquence by the force and eloquence of his prose style. In *Le Curial* he depicts in a fascinating manner the court life of Charles VII. In the *Quadriloge invectif*, four allegorical characters, *Noblesse* (Nobility), *Clergé* (Clergy), *Roture* (Commonalty), and *Labour* (Peasantry), all reproach each other for the evils of the Hundred Years' War, and seek a remedy. As a poet, he was mediocre, resorting too much to allegory, a common failing of the times influenced by the *Roman de la Rose*. *Le Livre des Quatre Dames*, considered his best poem, tells of four

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ladies who have lost their sweethearts in the battle of Agincourt—one was killed, one taken prisoner, a third disappeared, and a fourth fled. The women dispute as to which of them is the most unhappy. Chartier was very popular at court on account of his grace and amiability of manner and his poetry. Estienne Pasquier tells the following anecdote: One day, Marguerite of Scotland, first wife of the Dauphin, later Louis XI, seeing Chartier asleep on a chair, approached and kissed him. This greatly surprised her companions, for "nature had given him a beautiful mind in an ugly body." The princess replied that she had not kissed the man, but the lips from which came so many "golden words." Of this story, one French critic remarks: "there is in this legend more real poetry than in all the works of Alain Chartier."

As a prose writer, Chartier shows his close knowledge of the classics, and unconsciously, perhaps, imitates their style. In this way he may be considered a forerunner of the Renaissance; and this no doubt accounts for the esteem accorded to him later in the sixteenth century. A man of lofty ideas and noble sentiments, he strove to express them in clear and simple language. Estienne Pasquier compared Alain Chartier to Seneca.

CHAPTER V

THE THEATER IN THE MIDDLE AGES

WITH all nations the theater owes its origin to religion. In the fifth century manifestations of dramatic taste and spirit were observed at the funeral of Sainte Radegonde, Queen of the Franks: two hundred nuns chanted a kind of elegy around her coffin, while others responded with lamentations and mournful gestures from the windows of the monastery. The same circumstance is recorded of other imposing funerals.

The religious drama in France was developed toward the tenth century from the liturgical texts amplified by the priests, clerics, and monks for the edification of the faithful. They intercalated the ceremonies of their cult with simple representations, the object of which was the teaching by demonstration of the dogmas. For Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Ghost was represented by doves and birds let loose in the churches. The Day of Ascension, Christ was represented by a priest mounting the tribune. The demonstrations, which belonged to the Nativity, showed the priests as prophets passing in procession before the spectators announcing the coming of Christ. For Easter, scenes figurative of the Resurrection were represented.

At first the liturgic drama was composed of a short text in Latin prose. Gradually the language became partly Latin and partly the popular idiom, with a gradual change from prose to verse. Finally, versification predominated; the popular language superseded the Latin, and the drama was detached from the service.

Until the fifteenth century these religious dramas, were called *jeux* or *drames*, as the *Drame des Prophètes du Christ*,

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written in Latin in the eleventh century, the *Drame d'Adam* of the twelfth century, and the *Jeu de la Résurrection* of the thirteenth century. Toward the fifteenth century, it became customary to represent these religious scenes by tableaux, for which a great number of people were necessary: as the "Passion," the "Last Judgment," etc., and these tableaux were called *Mystères*. Later dialogues were introduced, and these dramatic mysteries created such an extraordinary vogue that associations were formed in all the large cities to represent them.

Besides the mysteries which originated with the liturgical texts and represented especially the events of the Gospel, the Passion, the Resurrection and the Incarnation, there proceeded another form of the theater from the canticles in honor of the saints, or from the readings of their lives given in the churches. This form was called *Miracle*. Since very early times it had been customary for students to represent scenes from the lives of their patron saints. In 1119, the Miracle of St. Catherine was given by the novices of the convent of Saint-Albans under the direction of the abbot. Sometimes the whole life of a saint was represented, and the relics of the saint placed on the scene during the representation.

About 1200, or perhaps earlier, Jean Bodel, of Arras, composed the Miracle or *Jeu de St. Nicholas*. The prologue to this play analyzes it and discloses the climax. For the poets of that time—like the Greeks¹—did not by any means, seek to surprise; nor did they believe, with d'Aubignac, that reticence in unraveling the plot was "the soul of tragedy." The trouvères announced in advance the story to be told in their epic poems and the dramatic authors did likewise. Reticence in the development of the plot is an entirely modern device. The *Jeu de St. Nicholas* of Bodel, and the *Miracle de Théophile*, by Rutebeuf, are the only specimens of Miracle plays preserved from the thirteenth century in France. The Miracle of Théophile, by Rutebeuf, consisting of only six hundred and sixty-six verses, is a very curious legend in dialogue.

¹ The ancient choruses in the Greek tragedies took the place of the monologues.

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Théophile is the Faust of the Middle Ages—resembling not Goethe's Faust, but Marlowe's. We have here a priest who has sold his soul to the devil in order to recover an office or benefice he has lost. He is saved by the intercession of the Virgin Mary. One may consider this play of the thirteenth century, chronologically, as the first of the Miracle plays of Notre Dame, in the fourteenth century.

The Miracle play had for its foundation a miracle; that is to say, the climax rested upon the intervention of a superhuman power. Most frequently, it seems, such a miraculous intervention proceeded from the Virgin Mary; this is because (as we see from the nondramatic writings, from the legends of the time, and from the monuments) the last centuries of the Middle Ages were very particularly devoted to the Mother of Jesus. These Miracle plays center upon a struggle between the demons (who have a visible rôle as characters in the drama) and the Virgin Mary, for the soul of the sinner. Gautier de Coincy, a French poet of the twelfth century, collected a large number of pious legends which had accumulated during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and translated them from Latin into French. They comprise about thirty thousand verses and are called the *Miracles Nostre Dame*. He sets forth that the sinner who has never ceased to invoke the Virgin will be saved no matter how black his crime. One finds in these plays characteristics of the artlessness and the moral conception of the time. In the story of Robert the Devil,¹ Robert is the spiritual son of Satan. He was conceived by a woman who prayed for a son, first to God, the Virgin, and the Saints, and finally invoked the Devil. Robert is thus the child of despair. He is steeped in crime, but eventually is filled with the divine grace, and expiates his sins, by acts of courage, charity, and humility, and dies like a saint. Robert the Devil was supposed to convey the ideas of original sin and divine compassion. Another Miracle tells of a monk so ignorant that he could retain in mind nothing more than *Ave Maria*, and was therefore scorned by all. His sanctity was revealed at his death, when five

¹ It contains forty-seven characters and two thousand verses. It was used for the theme in Meyerbeer's opera.

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roses sprang from his lips in honor of the five letters in the name of *Maria*. A nun having left her convent to live a life of pleasure, returned after many years to find that the Virgin Mary, to whom she had never ceased praying, had taken her place and fulfilled her duties as nun.

Another collection of *Miracles de Notre Dame* was composed in the thirteenth century, by Jean le Marchant, a priest of Chartres. Among them is the story of the chevalier who, in order to obtain riches promised to give his wife to the devil. While he was conducting her to his satanic majesty, the poor wife entered the chapel of Mary for a moment's prayer. In the meantime the Virgin Mary returned in the wife's place to the husband, and was given by him to the devil, whom she punished severely.

The story of the *Tombéor Notre Dame*,¹ tells of a poor juggler who became a monk and saw his companions pay reverence to the Virgin according to each one's ability in music, art, or poetry. Knowing nothing but his tricks, he secretly slipped into the chapel during the night, equipped with his old juggler outfit and rendered homage to the Virgin by dancing and juggling before her statue. Some of the monks hidden in the chapel, horrified at this sacrilegious proceeding, were about to denounce him when the Virgin herself approached the juggler to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

The *Miracles* from a dramatic standpoint are considered superior to the *Mysteries*, owing to their simplicity in construction and the possibility of development, whereas the *Mysteries* were prolific productions of enormous length, which retraced the entire history of religion, from the creation of the world to the resurrection. The *Passion*, a *Mystery* by Arnold Gréban, contained thirty-five thousand verses, and the *Mystery Actes des Apôtres*, by Arnold and Simon Gréban, comprised sixty thousand verses and the performance lasted forty days. Several hundred persons were required for these performances and they sometimes played the most terrible

¹ This legend is the source of Anatole France's story of the *Jongleur de Notre Dame* and of Maurice Lena's poem which Jules Massenet has set to music in an opera of the same name.

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scenes very realistically. He who represented Jesus was properly crucified, and escaped death with difficulty; the unfortunate one who enacted Judas was cut loose only at the last extremity, and when the public judged by his contortions that his remorse was sincere.

The members of the *confréries* especially devoted to these representations were considered in a measure professionals, and they had a fixed theater in some inclosed space; but generally the theater used was temporarily built and disappeared after the performance; the actors were the people who volunteered to take part, the rôles of Jesus, or God, or the saints being represented by priests. A glittering procession of horsemen rode through towns and villages, several months before, announcing with trumpet call and poetry (*cri du mystère*) the play, its date and duration, summoning those who wished to take part, and distributing their rôles among them. Thousands of people witnessed these performances. During the period of representation (from three to forty days) the gates of the town were closed and sentinels patrolled the streets to guard the deserted houses. The cost of the theater, together with the production, sometimes rose to one hundred thousand francs (\$20,000). The interior of the theater was richly decorated with draperies and had an enormous stage¹ divided into three parts (not of three stories as is still erroneously believed). The division in the center represented the earth sometimes with forty mansions: the palace of Herod, the temple of Jerusalem, the house of Mary of Nazareth, or the abode of Adam and Eve, etc. Mountains, forests, rivers, and lakes were introduced. To the left was Paradise, with flowers and trees where God, usually in pontifical robes, was represented with His angels watching the play to the accompaniment of music. To the right was the entrance of Hell in the shape of a dragon's mouth, opening and closing to engulf sinners and emitting fire and smoke. At first only men were allowed on the stage, as in Rome and Athens, but later women assumed the female rôle, a custom introduced by the wandering players from Italy. The scenery was the same throughout

¹ An excellent picture of the whole effect of the stage in the Middle Ages can be seen in a manuscript of the Mystery of the Passion in Valenciennes.

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the play, and all the actors remained on the stage from beginning to end, even if they had nothing more to do.

Of the numerous dramatic societies which flourished not only in Paris, but in all parts of France during the Middle Ages, the most celebrated was the *Confrérie de la Passion* composed of the bourgeois and artisans of Paris, who, under the direction of the clergy devoted themselves to the representation of the *mystères de la Passion*. In 1402, this organization received from the king the theater monopoly of Paris, which they enjoyed for more than a century. Their performances were first given in a hall of the *Hôpital de la Trinité*, a hostelry near the *Porte Saint-Denis* for pilgrims and travelers who arrived in Paris after the gates were closed. Then the company played in the *Hôtel de Flandres*, and finally they obtained the *Hôtel de Bourgogne* (former palace of the Dukes of Burgundy). In 1548, Parliament interdicted the representations of "mysteries"; this practically ended the most powerful dramatic corporation of Paris, and gave the deathblow to the religious theater of the Middle Ages. The *confrères* still had the theater privilege, but after unsuccessful attempts with secular plays they ceased their performances and rented their theater to a company of actors called *Comédiens français ordinaires du Roi*, and henceforth known as the *troupe royale de l'hôtel de Bourgogne*.¹ A decree issued by Louis XIV in 1676, declared the *Confrérie de la Passion* dissolved and conferred their property on the city hospital. The comedians paid the ground rent to the hospital as they had done to the *confrérie*. This is the origin of the *droit des pauvres*, a tax to which the French theaters, concerts, and analogous amusements are still subjected.

In imitation of the mysteries, great events of national or ancient history were dramatized, such as the *Siege of Orleans*, and the *Destruction of Troy*, immense works, but of small literary value.

The comic theater existed in Paris in the Middle Ages in the form of *soties*, *moralités* and farces. The growing desire

¹ This company was united by order of Louis XIV with Molière's company to form the famous *Comédie-Française*, or *Théâtre-Français*.

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of the people to witness these performances gave rise to innumerable dramatic societies in all parts of France: the *Puys*, the *Basoche*, the *Enfants sans-souci*, *Fous* or *Sots*, the *Cornards*, etc. The *Puys*, organized in honor of the Virgin, gave representations of the miracles of her life. Originally they were intended to crown religious plays, but gradually degenerated into awarding prizes to silly songs and licentious pieces.

The *Basoche* was a corporation of clerks from the *Palais de Justice*¹ (*basoche*), the members of which elected a king and his court from among their numbers. The *Basoche* presided at public entertainments and also gave theatrical performances—*farces*, *soties* and *moralités*—on the marble table² of the palace.

The *Enfants sans-souci* (Children without care), or *Fous*, or *Sots* (fools), received letters patent from Charles VI, to form a dramatic organization. They had a chief called Prince of *Sots*, a second chief called Mother *Notte*, and other dignitaries with equally bizarre titles. The plays they performed were called *soties*. The *sotie*, in one respect, resembled the Italian comedy, inasmuch as the characters were stereotyped personages, and always the same. It put on the stage live issues of the time. It was the journalism of the epoch. All the quarrels between royalty and the Holy See, all the dissensions between the people and the great, or the government—in one word, all the affairs of the time were made into *soties*—satires in dialogue. Petit de Julleville discredits the theory of the Parfaict brothers, who represented the *Enfants sans-souci*, as young people of good families playing comedy to amuse and to moralize the people. He asserts that their origin is obscure, but that they were composed of the *bohème* and not of the *jeunesse dorée* of Paris. The confrérie owned a playhouse called the *Maison des sots attendans*. Clé-

¹ When the Kings of France occupied the *Palais de Justice* it was often called the *Palais Royal*.

² Jurisdiction, called the *Table de Marbre*, because its sessions were held on a large marble table occupying the entire space of the large hall in the *Palais de Justice* in Paris. This table also served the Basochiens (clerks of the *basoche*) to give their performances. Henri III suppressed the title of the king of the *basoche*.

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ment Marot, who in his youth was one of its members, wrote a poem for his companions called *Ballade des Enfants sans-souci*.

The *sotie* differed from the farce only in the costume of the personages: the *sots* wore parti-colored dresses (green and yellow), and caps with long ears, and their names were always preceded by the epithet of *sot*. The society is supposed to have been founded on the idea that this world is a kingdom of folly. Sometimes the *soties* expressed very daring political satire. The people against whom it was directed were impersonated, dressed as *sots* and given over to ridicule. The *sotie* "*Vieux Monde, Abus, les sots*" bitterly censured the courts of justice, universities, and the Church, sometimes even royalty did not escape satire. Louis XI and Francis I placed a limit to these audacious liberties, but Louis XII often made them serve his political attacks. When this monarch was about to declare war with the pope, Julius II, he feared an insurrection among the people. Realizing the power of the theater on the public, he charged Pierre Gringoire to defend his politics in a play called *Jeu du Prince des sots*, a dramatic trilogy composed of a *sotie*, a *moralité*, and a farce. This was represented in the market place before the king, the University, and the people in 1511, and held to ridicule the pope. It is one of the most curious monuments of the literature of the Middle Ages. At the end of the sixteenth century, Henry IV completely banished all political allusions from the stage.

The *moralité* was a dramatic work, whose object was a moral and the characters of which were pure abstractions. The oldest *moralités* date from the fifteenth century, and relate to religion. Religious, didactic, satirical, polemical, legendary, or historical are the various characteristics developed in some of the *moralités*, while others simply point a moral. Such were the *moralités* of *Le Mauvais Riche et le Ladre* (the Bad, Rich Man and the Stingy Man), of the *Emperor who condemned to death his Nephew*, of *Grisélidis*,¹ of

¹ *Grisélidis*, or *Griselda*, the heroine of a legend used in the literature of all nations: in the *Lai du Frêne* of Marie de France, in the *Tales of Canterbury* by Chaucer, in Boccaccio's *Decameron*; by Petrarcha in Latin, by Erhart Gross and H. Stembowel in German, in one of Perrault's *Contes de ma mère l'Oye*, and recently by Armand Silvestre and Eugène Morand.

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the "Mother and Daughter" drawn from an ancient author, Valerius Maximus, and which is the story of a mother condemned to die of hunger but nourished in prison with her daughter's milk and finally pardoned in consideration of this pious fraud. One of the most curious *moralités* is the *Condamnation de Banquet* by Dr. Nicolas de la Chesnaye. The characters are: *Je bois à vous* (I drink to you), *Gourmandise* (gluttony), *Friandise* (daintiness), *Bonne Compagnie* (good company), jolly companions who dine sumptuously and with great merriment in spite of the hideous forms of *Colicque* (colic), *Goutte* (gout), *Apoplexie* (apoplexy), etc., which menace them. From Dinner these lively companions hasten to Supper still followed by the ugly specters who succeed in upsetting chairs, tables, and even some of the companions. Undaunted they then go to Banquet where, however, the specters joined by *la Mort* (death) succeed in killing some of the companions. The surviving ones institute proceedings against Dinner, Supper, and Banquet in the court presided over by Experience. The doctors Hippocrates,¹ Averroes² and others called in to give their verdict, condemn Banquet to be hanged by Diète (diet) and Supper is ordered to keep himself six miles—that is, six hours—from Dinner.

The *Danse Macabre* or Dance of Death was originally a kind of *moralité* intended to remind the living of the power of death. The performances took place at the Convent of the Innocents during the fourteenth century in Paris in commemoration, it is thought, of the seven Maccabees.³ It consisted of dialogues between Death and twenty-four people of various ranks from the pope, emperor, empress, king, and queen to the peasant and the beggar. Hence the Latin name *Chorea Maccabæorum* later changed to *Danse Macabre*. As early as the beginning of the fifteenth century this idea, also adopted by other countries, was introduced into painting,⁴

¹ The greatest doctor of ancient times (450 B.C.).

² A famous Arabian physician (twelfth century).

³ 2 Maccabees.

⁴ In the Marienkirche at Luebeck, the Campo Santa at Pisa, the Cathedral of Strassburg; in the cemeteries of Dresden, Berne, and Bâle, which latter has forty-five pictures.

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sculpture,¹ and finally into engraving² and printing,³ the different personages being represented as whirled around in a fantastic dance with Death as the leader. It was in vogue in England, but reached an extraordinary popularity in Germany in the middle of the fifteenth century, which was soon after repeated in France where it was treated in every possible way—in pictures, bas-reliefs, tapestry, etc. Death was made grotesque—a sort of “horrid harlequin,” a skeleton dancer, or a musician playing for dancers, leading all mankind.

The farce was at first an accessory to serious representations serving sometimes as an interlude to a Mystery or as an episode in the play itself. There are more than one hundred farces preserved from the Middle Ages in France. Their authors loved especially to picture conjugal life, and to make fun of the quarrels of the household, either among the burghers or the common people. In the farce, indicated by the title of *De celui qui enferma sa femme dans une tour, ou la Dame qui ayant tort, parut avoir raison* (of him who locked up his wife in a tower, or the lady who, being wrong, appeared to be right), we see the *George Dandin* of Molière. We have also the farce of the women who want to rule their husbands; the farce of the newly wed, the origin of a chapter in Rabelais, and a scene in Molière’s “Forced Marriage.” The admirable *Farce du Cuvier* (washtub) is classical: An almost angelic husband, Jean, lives with his wife and mother-in-law, who contrive to torture the poor man morning and evening. He is their slave, their scapegoat. They make him get up before daybreak, to light the fire, make up the rooms, wash the child. Then the women appear and find fault with everything. At last, one day, in desperation, he implores them to make a list of all his tasks, and to forget nothing—for he has decided to do nothing that is not set down in writing. So the women prepare the list, and he puts it into his pocket. Pretty soon the bitter

¹ In the church at Cherbourg.

² Hans Holbein (fifteenth century) left fifty-three sketches for engravings. Other engravings date from the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and even nineteenth centuries. (W. Kaulback and others.)

³ First known printed edition dates from 1485. Another edition is that of *Danse des Morts* of Bâle.

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and violent wife begins to chide him. Gesticulating, she does not think of a washtub behind her, in which the wash is soaking, and she falls into it. "Help, help! Jean, good husband, *dear* husband," she cries. But Jean gravely draws the paper from his pocket, and reads it attentively. "This is not written on my list," he says contentedly; and he crosses his arms. His wife's cries bring her mother. She attempts to lift her daughter from the tub, but she is not strong enough. "Jean, my dear son-in-law, help me!" she implores. "This is not on my list," repeats Jean. At last, when his wife is more than half-drowned, he consents to draw her out, but only on condition that henceforth he will be master in his house. They promise, but everyone says to himself, "The poor fool will always be led."

In some farces the judiciary world, the pedants, braggarts, and hypocrites are ridiculed. Among the best examples of this genre and replete with satirical humor and wit are the *Plaidoyer de la Simple et de la Rusée* (Plea of the Simple and the Crafty Woman) and the *Droits nouveaux* (New Rights) by William Coquillart.

The anonymous¹ and inimitable *Farce de Maître Pathelin* (Lawyer Pathelin) of the fifteenth century is more elaborate than all the other farces of the old theater. Rejuvenated in 1705 by Abbé Brueys, it still holds the stage of the Théâtre-Français. Pathelin, a briefless lawyer, swears that he will procure for himself and his wife that very day new garments of which they are greatly in need. He enters the shop of his neighbor, the draper, Master Guillaume Joceaulme; cajoles him, speaks of his late father, his aunt, praises the quality of his wares, and allows himself to be induced by Guillaume to buy six yards of superb cloth for nine écus.² He takes the cloth with him, and invites the merchant to come to his house in the evening, to eat goose and receive his money. Guillaume goes; but what a surprise! He finds the lawyer's wife in tears, and the lawyer himself in bed. The wife insists that her husband has not stirred from the house that day nor any day for the past eleven weeks! The draper is very in-

¹ Attributed without foundation to Antoine de La Salle, to Pierre Blanchet, and even to Villon.

² In ancient times an écu was worth about three francs (sixty cents).

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dignant upon hearing this, but Pathelin, in seeming delirium, utters cries in all sorts of dialects talking Picard, Flemish, Provençal, and even Turkish in such a manner that the draper, deafened and frightened, runs away, making the sign of the cross, and thinking that perhaps the devil himself had played him the trick:

Le diable, en lieu de ly,
A prins mon drap pour moy tenter.
Benedicite.¹

On his return home, Guillaume meets his shepherd, Aignelet, who has for years killed and eaten Guillaume's best sheep and pretended that sickness has carried them off. Guillaume finally in possession of proofs of the shepherd's perfidy, informs him that he will be summoned before the court. Aignelet in great distress intrusts his case to Pathelin, who advises him to feign idiocy and to reply to everything with a bleating ba-a! Guillaume, recognizing in his shepherd's lawyer the thief of his cloth is so disconcerted that he loses his head and confuses the story of the clothier with that of the sheep. He so tries the patience of the judge who in vain calls him back to the subject in question with the famous phrase *revenons à nos moutons* (let us return to our sheep) that he absolves Aignelet. Pathelin attempts to collect his fee, but the shrewd Aignelet has profited by the cleverness of his lawyer and defeats him with his eternal Ba-a. Pathelin, caught in his own trap, returns to his lodgings confessing that he has found his master.

These forms of comedy show most curious and original qualities, in them the old *esprit gaulois* is given a free course. They did not, however furnish the inspiration and materials of true French comedy, for in the intermediate Renaissance period they were completely lost in the shadow of the newly introduced dramas of antiquity.

¹ The devil, instead of him,
Has taken my cloth to tempt me.
Praise ye (O Lord).

CHAPTER VI

LYRIC POETRY

IN the Middle Ages narrative poetry took the form of the national epic, in which it reached its highest expression; but during a thousand years of literary productiveness, various attempts to create a body of lyric poetry were not fairly realized until the nineteenth century. The French genius does not lean to lyricism. G. Lanson notes that his countrymen are unlike the Germans with their deep, pessimistic nature, conscious of the tragedy of life. The French, he remarks, are led neither by personal experience nor by deep reflection to recognize the fact that the perpetuity of suffering is the very essence of life. On the contrary, life is to them a delight; and hence, unlike Heine, they have not been "able to create elegies out of their great sufferings." It has been their habit to regard only the actual world and life in its immediate aspect, and to free themselves from everything that would arrest action. They have long intrusted to the Church the business of regulating for them the questions of a future existence—of death and eternity; to spare themselves further thought except during the brief moments of the death-bed. Metaphysical problems and religious pensiveness were stored away in a corner of the heart where they would not disturb them in the enjoyment of life. Thus a great lyric poetry, the most unrestrained and elevated of all poetical inspirations, the outery of the earnestness and the sadness of existence, could not arise in France from those elements and circumstances which created it among other nations. The origin of lyric poetry in Northern France, so far as it meagerly existed at all, related to woman—to whom action was denied, and who lived somewhat in the realm of dreams and emotions conducive to poetry. For her, and perhaps by her, dancing songs and spindle songs were composed at the

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period of truly spontaneous and popular poetic creation. The songs with which the young women and girls in French hamlets accompanied their spinning wheels—one singing the theme solo, the others taking up the refrain—have been utterly lost. But with the aid of certain refrains (motets or ballettes) of an ancient and popular character, belonging to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, together with the cognate poetry in Sicily, Portugal and Germany, it has been possible to reconstruct these songs, though somewhat feebly.

Talis tôt se leva:

“Bonjour ait qui mon cœur a.”

Beau se vêtît et para,

Dessous l’aulnoie.

“Bonjour ait qui mon cœur a

N’est avec moi.”¹

All these songs speak of love. There is the maiden, rejoicing in her youth and beauty, who boasts of having a lover, or complains that she has none—who would marry him whom her parents refuse, or who rejects the choice of her parents, and tells of their cruelty. Secret meetings, departure, absence, desertion, dangers, surprises, fears, ruses, form the substance of the emotions and the songs. But the song did not become an ode. The dancing couplet did not rise to the dignity of the lyric poem; it was not enlarged by a feeling for nature, by a sympathetic communion with universal life, by a profound and trembling intuition of the eternal conditions of human suffering, or by intensity of emotion and the absorption of the whole being in one great passion. There is a lively, pleasing, dancing rhythm, to be sure—wonderfully adapted to the superficial form of those sentiments which touch the heart without filling it; but nothing of soul-stirring passion or of ardent self-forgetfulness. There are poetic dialogues between two lovers, or between mother and daughter, wife and husband. There are short stories, in couplets—romances of “fair Eglantine before her mother, sewing a shirt,” of “fair Amelot spinning alone in her chamber.” Or, fair

¹ Talis arose early: “Good-day to him who has my heart.”

Beautifully she arrayed herself, and adorned herself under the alders.

“Good-day to him who has my heart; he is not with me.”

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Erembour sees, passing by her window, Count Renaud, who has deserted her; she calls to him, and clears herself of the suspicion of infidelity which kept him away. Such are the spinning songs of the rude, early French period—poor, but spontaneous, and not to be confounded with the mediocre imitations by Audefroï le Bâtard, in the thirteenth century.

The dancing songs consisted essentially of couplets and refrains—*rondets*, *ballettes*, *virelis*, from which originated the *rondeaux*, *ballades*, *virelais* of the fourteenth century, with fixed forms. The parting of the lovers, warned of the dawn by the lark, and, later, by the watcher, constitutes the genre called *aubade*¹ (from *aube*, dawn). The two most important kinds of the old French lyrics are the “Romances,” also called *Chansons de toile*, from songs sung when weaving linen (*toile*), the subject of which is usually a young girl of noble birth and some knight. The other genre is the *Pastourelle* (feminine form of *pastoureau*, shepherd), the rhythms of which were particularly lively and graceful and whose contents depicted the meeting of a knight and a shepherdess who sometimes accepted, sometimes refused him. These two genres were perhaps imported from the South; yet, treating, as they do, of universally human subjects, they may have grown spontaneously.

We find, also, some early songs filled with a human sentiment far removed from the theme of love. A crusader's song, composed before 1147, is more oratorical than lyrical, colored more with reason than with passion, and significant in its use of a didactic moral:

Comtes ni ducs ni les rois couronnés
Ne se pourront à la mort dérober:
Car, quand ils ont grands trésors amassés,
Plus il leur faut partir à grand regret.
Mieux leur valût les employer à bien:
Car quand ils sont en terre ensevelis,
Ne leur sert plus ni château ni cité.²

¹ The morning counterpart of the serenade.

² Nor counts nor dukes nor crowned kings can cheat death; for when they have amassed great treasures, the more they must be loath to go. Better for them to have used these treasures for good; for when they are buried in the ground, neither castle nor stronghold is of use to them.

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With this production we see general ideas entering into French literature: the road is opened which leads to Malherbe. But up to this time French lyricism had little value; no one thought even of collecting its examples. Then, about 1150, the rich Provencal influence began to interrupt the current of original French lyrics by introducing an artificial and learned poetry in France, yet, at the same time, raising the respect for lyric verses, and thus preserving for us some remnants of the popular productions of former centuries. The creation of Provencal poetry is due, to a considerable extent, to woman; from her it received its subject and inspiration. For, in Provence, social conditions gave woman a dominion, and made her taste a law. The baron of the North, inclosed within the thick walls of his fortress, dreamt only of war. But the nobles of the South—at peace under two or three great counts; rich, living in cities, enamored of festivals and tournaments, with a spirit already open to culture and ideals, their ears trained to rhythm—created for themselves a literature in harmony with the physical and social conditions of their lives. In their leisure, love became the foremost affair; and in order to please woman, they acquired polish, humanity and freed themselves from feudal ignorance and brutality. There was less need of epics than of a lyric poetry.

Demogeot, in his History of French Literature, tells us that the epic songs of the language of the North have unrolled before us the ideal picture of feudalism—a vast scene of history in which the life of the Middle Ages is disclosed in its entirety. But there is another class of poems which reveals them to us from a different point of view. These are the small *genre pictures*—portraits which portray so well the costume and the physiognomy of the epoch, that they form the indispensable complement of the large canvases, and lend them truth and life. First, and especially in the South, lyric inspiration awakens. Happy flower of the climate, it was born there, as it were, without cultivation; under a more gracious sky, under less barbarous governments, men allowed themselves to embrace earlier the sweet seductions of life. In that land all women were loved, all knights were poets. The noblest lords, the proudest Burgraves of Pro-

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vence and of Languedoc, the Counts of Toulouse, the Dukes of Aquitaine, the Dauphins of Vienne and of Auvergne, the Princes of Orange, the Counts of Foix—all these composed and sang verses. Often, even a page at court, sometimes even the son of a serf, was honored, through his talent, only less than his noble master, provided he possessed intelligence and an elegant deportment.

After Provence had detached herself from Northern France and formed an independent State¹ under Boson I and his successors, she became happy and tranquil under her obscure and paternal sovereigns, and saw her population and her wealth growing; the customs became refined, the language polished, and a harmonious instrument in the hands of its first poets. The fusion of one part of Provence with Catalonia,² under the rule of Raymond-Béranger, in 1092, imparted a new movement to the southern spirit. Boson, governor of Provence under Charles the Bald, freed himself after the king's death, in 897, from French sovereignty, and founded the kingdom of Arles (Cisjurane Burgundy). The city of Arles was called "Gallic Rome" from its importance. The two peoples spoke almost the same language. The spirit of the one, the wealth of the other, produced an elegance of customs still unknown to the other regions. The influence of Spain since the eleventh century had its effect on this blossoming literature, developing a strong lyrical tendency which lasted until the thirteenth century. The splendor of the courts of Barcelona, Granada and Cordova, the magnificence of Moorish architecture, made known by the large number of French, Provençal, and Gascon knights who had joined King Alphonse IV of Castile and the Cid³ Rodriguez de Bivar, were sources of inspiration.

Through the knights of Arabia, who visited the courts

¹ Ancient Hispania, Tarraconensis, overrun by the Alani, Goths, and, later, by the Saracens.

² United to Aragon in 1137, but in revolt against the Spanish soldiery, Catalonia gave herself to France and became the patrimony of Raymond.

³ The principal national hero of Spain, famous for his exploits against the Moors; but, of course, the Cid of the Chronicle is not at all the Cid of the Romances.

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of Christian princes,¹ Oriental poetry became gradually infiltrated into the languages of the South, and with the aid of music, instilled into them not only its inspirations, but its harmony and its rhythmic form. With the exception of a small number of epic works² which Fauriel (French literary historian, 1772–1844), and Raynouard (1761–1836) have made known to us, the only monuments of the southern muse are certain impulsive effusions of sentiment or spirit. They resemble not so much literary compositions as the melodious music of that life of love and pleasure which passed joyfully from the tournaments of the castles to the eternal feasts of a smiling climate. To produce such works it was not necessary to be a great cleric and to know how to read; it was enough to have a heart capable of love. One of the chief merits of those charming songs is entirely lost for him who cannot read them easily in their original language. The Provençal rhythm is inflected by the troubadours with a coquetry full of grace—"like a ribbon with striking colors which floats and vanishes in a knot artistically formed." "I confess," says Raynouard, "that I have tried in vain to offer a translation of them; the sentiment, the grace, cannot be translated. These are delicate flowers, the fragrance of which must be breathed on the plant." "To enjoy those songs," says Schlegel, "which have charmed so many illustrious sovereigns, so many brave knights, so many ladies famous for their beauty, one must hear those troubadours themselves, and try to understand their language. If you do not want to take that trouble, well, then, you are condemned to read the translations of Abbé Millet" (French scholar of the eighteenth century). The number of known troubadours is more than five hundred, among whom the most famous are: Bertrand de Born and Bernard de Ventadour of the Limousin group, Arnaud de Marveil, Richard Cœur de Lion, King Alphonse of Aragon, William IX of Poitou, the oldest known troubadour, Prince Geoffroy Rudel de Blaya, and Clara d'Anduze. The theme for their songs was principally love and the troubadours disguised the iden-

¹ See description in the *Dernier Abencérage* of Chateaubriand.

² See Gérard de Roussillon; *Jaufré e Bruneseutz*; *Chronique des Albigeois*; *Roman de Flamenca*; *Roman de Fierabras*.

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tity of the ladies by substituting names of fantasy, such as: *Gent conquis* (Fair captive), *Sobre totz* (Above all), *Bel vezer* (Beautiful countenance), and even *Mon diable* (My devil).

Arnaut de Marveil or Maroill, a poor serf who became a skillful troubadour, attached to the court of Viscount de Beziers, had fallen in love with Countess Adelaide, daughter of Raymond V, Count of Toulouse. Singing, under a fictitious name, of the lady he loved, he traces thus ingenuously her picture:

Pus blanca es que Elena,
 Belhazors que flors que nays;
 E de cortezia plenja,
 Blanca dens ab motz verays,
 Ab cor franc ses vilanatge,
 Color fresca ab sauras cri:
 Dieus que'l det lo senhoratage
 La sal qu'anc gensor no vi.¹

He finally disclosed himself as the author of the songs; but no sooner had the countess encouraged him, than she was forced to dismiss the poet at the behest of her royal suitor, King Alphonse of Castile. So Arnaut went forth in despair, and sought refuge with his friend and seignior, William of Montpellier. The fountains of his grief were opened, and he sang:

"Sweet my musings used to be,²
 Without shadow of distress,
 Till the queen of loveliness,
 Lowly, mild, yet frank as day,
 Bade me put her love away,
 Love so deeply wrought in me.
 And because I answered not,
 Nay, nor e'en her mercy sought,
 All the joy of life is gone;
 For it lived in her alone."

¹ Fairer than the far-famed Helen,
 Lovelier than the flow'rets gay,
 Snow-white teeth, and lips truth-telling,
 Heart as open as the day;
 Golden hair, and fresh bright roses—
 God, who formed a thing so fair,
 Knows that never yet another
 Lived, who can with her compare.

² *Mot eran dous miei cossir.* Harriet W. Preston's translation.

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Another famous troubadour was Bertran de Born,¹ whose adventurous life and turbulent humor, Villemain has set forth in an interesting fashion. This great lord, Viscount of Hautefort, belonging to the twelfth century, whom Uhland and Heine have immortalized in their beautiful poems, was called Tyrtaeus because he inspired with his fiery songs the warriors of France against the English invaders. But he was of a disposition warlike, violent, passionate, and unscrupulous, and, says Faguet, deserved in spite of his final penitence in the Convent of Citeaux, to be placed by Dante in his "Hell." In his verses he sometimes affords a strange relief to the love songs of his contemporaries by a fortunate admixture of warlike sentiment and pictures borrowed from feudal life. Thus does he appeal to his lady-love² from the slanders of his enemies :

*(Jeu m'escondic que mal non m'ier
De so qu'ens an de mi dig lauzengier, etc.)*

I cannot hide from thee how much I fear
The whispers breathed by flatterers in thine ear
Against my faith. But turn not, oh, I pray,
That heart so true, so faithful, so sincere,
So humble and so frank, to me so dear,
O, lady turn it not from me away!

So may I lose my hawk, ere he can spring;
Borne from my hand by some bold falcon's wing;
Mangled and torn before my very eye,
If every word thou utterest does not bring
More joy to me than Fortune's favoring,
Or all the bliss another's love might buy.

¹ An indefatigable fighter, who incited the two sons of Henry II of England to revolt against their father. He lost his castle twice. Dante, in his *Inferno*, describes him carrying his own bloody head, which still seems to menace and to curse.

² Mænz de Montagnac, daughter of the Viscount de Turenne and wife of Taleyrand de Périgord. The song herewith reproduced places before us, says Sismondi, the real knight of olden times, busied with war and the chase, successively appealing to everything that is dear to him in life, to everything which has been the study of his youth and his riper age, and yet esteeming them all light, in comparison with love.

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So, with my shield on neck, 'mid storm and raid;
With vizor blinding me, and shorten'd rein,
And stirrups far too long, so may I ride,
So may my trotting charger give me pain;
So may the ostler treat me with disdain,
As they who tell those tales have grossly lied.

When I approach the gaming board to play,
May I not turn a penny all the day,
Or may the board be shut, the dice untrue;
If the truth dwell not in me when I say
No other fair e'er wiled my heart away
From her I've long desired and loved—from you.

Or, prisoner to some noble, may I fill,
Together with three more, some dungeon chill,
Unto each other odious company;
Let masters, servants, porters, try their skill
And use me for a target if they will,
If ever I have loved aught else but thee.

So may another knight make love to you,
And so may I be puzzled what to do;
So may I be becalmed 'mid oceans wide;
May the king's porter beat me black and blue;
And may I fly ere I the battle view,
As they that slander me have grossly lied.

His poetry—like himself—is powerful, ardent, passionate; his *sirventes* are satires, challenges, duels.

The troubadours often made use of little satirical poems which they hurled at their rivals, their lords, the kings, the clergy, and sometimes even at the ladies. These poems in which satire intermingled with warlike inspiration were called *sirventes*¹ which originally meant *service songs*, that is, songs used in the service of certain lords or of factions (associated principally with the Ghibellines). The *sirventes* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries took the place of the newspaper or pamphlet against the Pope and were circulated from castle to castle in southern France.

¹ "Poemata in quibus servientium, seu militum facta et servitia referuntur."—Du Cange, *Sirventois*.

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The most piquant form in which the Provençals composed the love song was the so-called *tenson*, or dialogue poem of repartee (*Jeu parti*) between two troubadours—a kind of poetic tournament to which they challenged one another in the presence of ladies and knights. According to Jean Nostradamus, the *tensons* were disputations carried on between the poetical knights and ladies on some subtle question of love; and when they could not agree the disputants sent the *tensons*, for decision, to illustrious presiding ladies who held open “courts of love,” a chivalrous institution existing from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. In these gallant courts the ladies presided and passed judgment in “decrees of love” (*arrests d’amour*). In a code called *De Arte Amatoria et Reprobationis amoris* (1174) written by André the court chaplain, are cited the *cours d’amour* of Ermingard, Countess of Narbonne, of Queen Eleanor of Guyenne, of Marie of France, Countess of Champagne. In another list, supplied by Nostradamus, Laura de Noves, wife of Hugh de Sade, is mentioned among the principals in a court of Avignon. It was Laura, the “lady with the beautiful blond and wavy hair,” who inspired Petrarcha.¹ Her beauty, her virtue, and her mind conquered all hearts. Petrarcha, who lived at Avignon, saw Laura and loved her—loved her for twenty years, even for ten years after her death. His poems of which she is the subject embrace three hundred and eighteen sonnets and eighty-eight songs. Laura did not wish to

¹ Petrarch (Francesco Petrarcha) (1304–1374), one of Italy’s greatest poets, whose sonnets to Laura have won him enduring fame, was born at Arezzo (Italy), and came to Avignon at the age of five years. His family had fled their native land because of its unhappy strife. Petrarcha studied at Avignon, and later, to please his family, he studied law at Montpellier. The poet was much sought after because of his amiable and sweet disposition. Rome, Naples, and the Court of France contended for his presence. He betook himself to Rome, where he was crowned poet laureate at the Church of St. Peter; and he suspended his crown in the vault of the edifice, to render homage to God for his genius. Venice finally accorded justice to the family of the poet, returning to him his fortune and inviting him to live there, but he refused. He retired to Arco, where he died at the age of seventy years. Petrarcha wrote in French as well as in Italian, and it was France that nourished and stimulated his genius.

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marry the poet, lest he cease to sing. To dispel his cares, Petrarcha traveled; then he returned to Vacluse. Laura de Noves died of the plague, when she was thirty-eight years of age. Petrarcha, who was then at Naples, hastened to Vacluse to weep over his beloved, whose body was interred in the monastery of the Dominicans.

Anything like a comprehensive enumeration of the troubadours would expand this chapter disproportionately; even Raynouard's ¹ *Choix des Poésies originales des Troubadours* (1816) embraces a list of some three hundred poets. Yet such is their relation to the society and the literature of the period, and with so much romantic interest are their personalities and productions invested, that some of them, at least, must be mentioned if only in the briefest fashion.

William of Poitiers,² crusader, king, lover, was first of all, a man of action, yet he found time in the heat of his turbulent career to compose poems in many keys, of a finish and quality that compel our admiration. His verses inspired by "the tender passion," and supposed to reflect his own peculiar amatory adventures, are not at all meat for babes; but William sometimes voices his sentiments in the language of chivalry and idealism. Characteristic of this vein is his spring poem (*Pus vezem de novelh florir*, etc.) :

¹ English readers who cannot enjoy the originals, and for whom Raynouard is a closed book, will find no considerable body of good translations in any one volume. They must seek for them in the scattered pages of various essayists and historians. The translations reproduced in this chapter are taken, in part, from Henry Carrington's *Anthology of French Poetry*, from the tenth to the nineteenth centuries; Sismondi's *Historical View of the Literature of the South of Europe*, Roscoe's translation; Harriet W. Preston's *Troubadours and Trouvères, New and Old*.

² William IX, Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine (born 1071; died 1127), reigned over Germany, the northern half of Aquitaine, Berry, Limousin, Auvergne. Refusing to join the first Crusade, in 1095, he could not, upon the capture of Jerusalem, four years later, resist the call for aid voiced by the little band of Red Cross Knights in the Holy Land. He signalized his departure by a poetic lament that expresses his poignant emotions on leaving his young son and his beloved land, to engage in an expedition so little to his taste, and naively exhibits the conflict between his natural impulses and a sense of duty. He survived this perilous campaign and lived twenty-five years longer.

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Behold! the meads are green again,
The orchard-bloom is seen again
Of sky and stream the mien again
Is mild, is bright;
Now should each heart that loves obtain
Its own delight.

But I will say no ill of love,
However slight my guerdon prove:
Repining doth not me behoove;
And yet—to know
How lightly she, I fain would move,
Might bliss bestow!

There are who hold my folly great;
Because with little hope I wait;
But one old saw doth animate
And me assure:
Their hearts are high, their might is great,
Who well endure.

It was this same poet of spring and love—with little affection for church and clergy—who drew his sword upon the Bishop of Poitiers when that prelate was in the very act of excommunicating him because of some notorious scandal. But the doughty bishop was too quick for him. “Strike,” said he, “for I have done.” “That I shall not,” said William, sheathing his sword, “for I think too ill of you to send you to Paradise.”

Of greater and more abundant poetic gifts, and of a more copious output, was Bernard of Ventadorn (or Ventadour), son of a baker, and foremost among the sweet singers of Provence. Born about 1130, his poetic powers were fostered by his patron and seignior, Ebles II. It was the youthful wife of Ebles—the lively and gentle Adelaide of Montpellier—whom he first enshrined in his verses. They came to love one another, and this did not please the lady’s husband; so Bernard was given his congé. Going thence, he found consolation at the feet of the Duchess of Normandy, who was no less a personage than Eleanor, granddaughter of William of Poitiers, divorced from Henry VII of France and married to

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Henry II of England, becoming the mother of Richard Cœur de Lion. The youthful Bernard, at this time, was ten years younger than Eleanor—she herself was but thirty-three, and wondrously attractive.

Richard Cœur de Lion (1157–1199), warrior, King of England and troubadour, was made prisoner after his return from the third Crusade, by Henry IV, Emperor of Germany. Richard's favorite troubadour, Blondel de Nesles, traveled throughout the empire in search of his place of captivity, singing at every stronghold a song which he and Richard had composed. At the Castle of Durrenstein, his faithfulness was rewarded by hearing Richard's voice in answer. Blondel made known the whereabouts of the royal prisoner to the Queen Mother in England, who soon ransomed her son.

“Needs must I sing, I have no other choice,
Although I find but grief and weariness;
Still, it is always better to rejoice,
Yielding to grief is ever profitless:
Yet not as one beloved I sing my lay,
But as in sorrow, pensive and astray,
And since of good I see no likeness,
By words I am forever led away.

“One thing I tell in which I naught deceive—
That in all love is chance and fickleness;
And were I able her control to leave,
It were more worth than did I France possess;
But in despair and madness oft I say,
Better the memory of her charms should stay,
Of her great wisdom and sweet gentleness,
Than to hold all the world beneath my sway.”¹

These verses are the work of Thiebaut IV (1201–1253), who preëminently naturalized in the North the graceful compositions of the troubadours. Grandson of a king of Navarre, son and successor of a count of Champagne, edu-

¹ Sismondi notes that the poems of the King of Navarre are exceedingly difficult to comprehend. Antique words were long considered in France as more poetical than modern ones; and thus, while the language of prose was polished and perfected, that of poetry retained all its early obscurity.

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cated in the South and passing his life among the men of the North—he was admirably qualified as a poetic adapter. He imitated the troubadours, but in doing so he elevated their songs, and seasoned them with a little of the salt of the trouvères.

Froissart, called *historien errant* (wandering historian)—author of ballades, rondeaux, virelais—is a charming narrator even in verse. There is nothing more ingenious than his *Dit du Florin* (What the Florin said)—a piquant conversation between the author and a solitary piece of money which, by chance, remained in his purse; nothing is more amusing than *Li Débat du Cheval et du Lévrier*—the dialogue between the horse that carries the poet on his adventurous excursions and the faithful hound that follows him. In a long allegory entitled *Li Horloge d'Amour* (The Clock of Love) he compares, piece by piece, the heart of man with a clock. Each passion corresponds to a part of the machine: desire is the main spring, beauty serves as a balance-wheel, and so on. Here is a brief specimen of his verse taken from Longfellow's *Poetry of Europe*.

Take time while yet it is in view,
For Fortune is a fickle fair;
Days fade, and others spring anew,
Then take the moment still in view.

What boots to toil and cares pursue?
Each month a new moon hangs in air;
Take then the moment still in view,
For Fortune is a fickle fair.

Arnaud Daniel, of the Périgord group of troubadours, Petrarch has placed in his *Triumphes* (Fourth *Triomphe*); and Dante in his *Purgatory* says of him: "This one surpasses all the poets of his country by his love songs and his romance prose."

Guiraut de Bornelh, or Borneil,¹ who loved and sang in the first half of the thirteenth century, belongs well up in the

¹ He was the first troubadour who made a chanson, as, up to that time, poems were called verses, but never songs.

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list of troubadours. His ancient biographer, indeed, insists that there was never a better troubadour; and the weight of opinion seems to be with him, and against the judgment of Dante, who preferred Arnaut Daniel. In the winter, Guiraut de Bornelh studied in one of the schools where, it would seem, formal instruction in the troubadour poetry was afforded at this particular period; and "all summer" says his biographer, "he journeyed from court to court, accompanied by two jongleurs¹ who performed his songs. Guiraut was a master of the chanson; his love songs are remarkable for their lyric power and profound emotion. And, late in life, when a civil and semireligious war blackened the beauty of the land, he rose to his full height as the poet of his country's desolation. The loftiness of his amatory sentiment appears in an *aubade* (" *Reis glorios, verais lums e clardatz* "), of which these stanzas are but a part:

All-glorious king, who dost illuminate
All ways of men, upon thy grace I wait;
Praying thy shelter for my spirit's queen,
Whom all the darkling hours I have not seen;
And now the dawn is near.

Sleepest or wakest, lady of my vows?
Oh, sleep no more, but lift thy quiet brows;
For now the Orient's most lovely star
Grows large and bright, welcoming from afar
The dawn that now is near.

Oh, sleep no more, but gracious audience give;
What time with the awakening birds I strive,
Who seek the day amid the leafage dark,
To me, to me, not to that other, hark,
For now the dawn is near.

Among the well-known troubadours may be mentioned: Marcabrun (probably a contemporary of William of Poitiers), whose verses are so rarely concerned with love that

¹ In company with a troubadour were usually one or two jongleurs, who afforded diversion to the audience with jokes and juggles, and sometimes performed the songs.

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he enjoys a unique distinction as the only troubadour personally immune to that malady. The shockingly tragic history of William of Cabestaing together with that of his sweetheart, the Lady Soremonda, lends a peculiar interest to his poems, seven of which have been preserved.¹ The story runs that Raymond of Roussillon killed Cabestaing from jealousy, and then served his heart in a repast to Lady Raymond. After she had unsuspectingly partaken of it, her husband exultingly made known to her the fact. She replied that since she had tasted such noble food, she would taste no other, and starved to death.² Raimon de Miraval "loved a great many ladies, some of whom treated him well, and others ill," and he wrote verses which showed less sincerity than ingenuity and grace. Raimbaut de Vaqueiras whose singular adventure with the Lady Beatrice of Montferrat has been set forth in detail by his ancient biographer—a poet in whose elaborate "lament" "we seem to hear the trumpet contending with the lute." Vaqueiras fell in battle along with his master Montferrat, in the expedition against Constantinople in 1207. Pierre Cardenal³ subtle, intellectual, inquiring, was a kind of Omar Khayyam of the Middle Ages. In one of his daring *sirventes*, he rehearses the bold defense he means to make when summoned before the judgment seat of God. Another troubadour, Peter of Auvergne, was surnamed "The Ancient," and Bertrand of Alamanon was but an echo of his greater predecessors.

Some of the troubadours followed the crusaders to Palestine, but even they dreamed only of love; one, Prince Geoffroy Rudel de Blaya, set sail for the Holy Land only because he was possessed by a strange passion for the Countess of Tripoli, whom he had never seen. So he went to offer her his heart, and to die when he should look into her beautiful eyes.

¹ La Curne de-St. Palaye spent many years in collecting manuscripts of Provençal poetry, most of which had never been printed. Millot published translations from this collection.

² The same story is told of the "gentil Sire de Coucy" and "la dame du Fayel"; this novel, published in 1839 by Crapelet, deserves, according to Gaston Paris, a place of honor in the history of literature.

³ "Indisputably the subtlest and most intellectual spirit among them all" (the troubadours), says the author of *Troubadours and Trouvères*.

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Edmond Rostand has made use of this episode for his play entitled *La Princesse Loïtaine* (The Distant Princess).

The troubadours laid more stress on the rhyme and rhythm, on the form of expression, than on the subject matter, although themes for inspiration were not wanting: the Conquest of England by William the Conqueror, the capture of Jerusalem by Godfrey de Bouillon, the capture of Sicily by Guiscard and de Hauteville—great events to excite the imagination and inspire enthusiasm.

The wars of the Albigenses and the Waldensians, helped to silence the troubadour's song; after the wars, they still sang, but it was not the harmonious song of love, of spring, of the blue skies of that climate of Paradise, but the song of hatred and malediction. Lack of profound inspiration is the true cause of the rapid decadence of Provençal poetry. In the learned or labored lyricism, nothing is popular—neither the foundation nor the form. In the overrefinement of thought, in the artificiality of the verses, these works suffer from an essential aversion to the common naturalness; for good sense they substitute spirit, and their goal is the pleasure of an élite of the initiated, and not universal intelligibility. However, after a century of noble pastime and fashion, the learned lyricism declined. The French barons cooled off and abandoned it; but, as had happened with the epic, the burghers picked up the art which had lost the favor of the nobles, and assured it a new lease of life. In the communities of Picardy this gallant poetry is continued by Bodel, Moniot, Adam de la Halle,¹ till the last years of the thirteenth century. Though Provençal still remained the language of the people, its literature perished, and was revived only in the course of centuries—a revival accomplished rather artificially and without the recovery of the ancient vigor.

¹ Jean Bodel and Adam de la Halle were both from Arras, a town with a great literary reputation, which caused Guilbert de Berneville, in one of his *chansons*, to represent God Himself descending to earth to learn the art of poesy in Arras.

CHAPTER VII

POPULAR POETRY

WITH the waning power of knighthood and the blossoming of burghership, lyric poetry fled from the crumbling walls of castles to towns and villages, and throwing off its garb of allegory and romance, gave vent to the natural and joyful feeling of the people in melody—and thus song was born during the fifteenth century in France. The few poets of note who bridged the dark Middle Ages and the Renaissance, were Charles d'Orléans, Villon and Basselin. We hear Olivier Basselin, the village Anacreon of Normandy, laughing and singing—"chantant en beuvant, et beuvant en chantant" ("singing as he drinks, drinking as he sings"):

"Si voulez que je cause et prêche,
Et parle latin proprement,
Tenez ma bouche toujours fraîche;
De bon vin l'arrosant souvent.
Car je vous dis certainement,
Quand j'ai sèche la bouche,
Je n'ai plus d'entendement
Ni d'esprit qu'une souche."¹

His melodious rhymes were the first to brighten the life of dreary drudgery led by the people, and to comfort, like a soothing potion, the hearts of the poor, crushed and discouraged by taxes and war.

This Olivier Basselin, creator of the modern song, gave free vent in his verse to his good-humor, to his copious mock-

¹ If you would have me sing and preach, and speak Latin properly, my tongue must be freshened and watered with sparkling wine. For I assure you that when my throat is parched I have no more mental apprehension than a log.

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ery, and to his sturdy Norman hatred of the English. He was born at Vire, a small town in Normandy, about 1390, and was proprietor of a fuller's mill for the manufacture of cloth. Situated under the Cordeliers Hill, near the Bridge of Vau, its ruins, which have preserved the name of the Basselin mill, are still to be seen. On the picturesque banks of the Vire river, Olivier sang his poems, to which his fellow citizens gave the title, still preserved, of *Vaux de Vire*, after the name of the place which inspired them. During the entire fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the songs were called *Vaux de Vire*, then *Vaudeville*, by corruption. In the seventeenth century they went indifferently by the names of *chansons* and *vaudevilles*, as we see in Boileau, who in his *Art Poétique*, uses both terms to designate the same thing. Finally, it was called *chanson* only, since vaudeville meant something quite different. The good Norman fuller loved especially three things: wine, cider, and peace—wine more than cider, and cider more than peace. It was Basselin who introduced into the Bocage¹ the custom of singing songs after repasts. He had a remarkable facility in improvising songs. In his *Vau de Vire*, entitled "Probity and Joy," he showed good-nature sharpened with a touch of malice. Picturesqueness of expression was not wanting, as is demonstrated in this lively and charming quatrain:

Toujours dans le vin vermeil
Ou autre liqueur bonne,
On voit un petit soleil
Qui frétille et rayonne.²

The most celebrated of his songs is the one entitled *A mon nez* (To my nose):

Il vaut bien mieux cacher son nez dans un grand verre:
Il est mieux assuré qu'en un casque de guerre.
Pour cornette ou guidon suivre plutôt on doit
Les branches d'hierre ou d'if qui montrent où l'on boit.³

¹ A name given to several small countries of ancient France, of which the two best known were the Bocage normand and the Bocage vendéen.

² Always in the rosy wine, or other good liquor, one sees a little sun that sparkles and beams.

³ It is better to hide one's nose in a big glass: 'tis more secure than a

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Basselin was killed in the Battle of Agincourt. His songs, oft-repeated by the people of Normandy and orally transmitted by the rhapsodists of Rouen, Vire, and Falaise (towns in Normandy), were printed for the first time about 1576, under the title of *Livre des chants nouveaux et vaux-de-Vire d'Olivier Basselin*, by Jean Le Houx, poet and lawyer of Vire. This, no doubt, accounts for the rejuvenation of the style, the clearness of the verses, and the omission of archaisms; and this may also account for the erroneous idea, maintained by some, that Basselin's songs, "which show his talent and his ignorance of the rules of art," were composed by Jean Le Houx.

Charles d'Orléans (father of Louis XII) court poet, spoke the language of the courtiers—the language of Blois, of Chenonceaux, of London. Neither his long captivity in England (1411–1440), nor the misfortune which befell his family and his country,¹ brought forth even one utterance of profound passion from this poet. His poems breathe a spirit of unquenchable joy, and although commonplace in conception, reveal beauty of expression, fine susceptibility, and facility of form. Poetry was for him not the simple expression of the soul—it was a kind of "learned embroidery"—made by the imagination. Besides the poems written in prison in the English language, he left several hundred ballads, songs, roundelays, etc. In all his poems, of which there are two large volumes, there is not one verse which suggests vulgarity, for Charles d'Orléans remained a princely gentleman in every line he wrote.

After his release he lived in the Château de Blois, surrounded by a court of poets and literary lights, and continued to write poetry, a task which had consoled him for many a weary day during his captivity. This court was a poetic

helmet. For pendant or banner, one ought rather to follow the branches of ivy or yew, which show where one drinks.

Formerly the very small inns were called *bouchons* (tavern bushes); to distinguish them from other houses, branches of yew or fir were fastened above the doors. To this day in all the small villages of Normandy, Brittany and other parts of France one may see the *bouchon* (bush) over the tavern doors.

¹ His father was assassinated and his wife died. At the Battle of Agincourt, where he was taken prisoner, the flower of French chivalry perished.

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arena where literary tournaments were held, and where the rivals contested for prizes in ballad or song. Gaston Paris writes: "It has been shrewdly remarked that there is, to say the least, a strange coincidence in the relations so different of Charles of Orleans and Villon with Louis XI; the same lips which uttered the words that killed the last songster of the Middle Ages freed the first modern poet."¹

Villon's real name was François de Montcôrbier. He was born in the vicinity of Paris in 1431, and owes his surname of Villon to Guillaume de Villon, canon of Saint-Benoît, who took him under his protection and gave him an excellent education. At twenty-one, he took the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Paris, but soon his roguish nature asserted itself. His motto "Il n'est trésor que de vivre à son aise" (none such treasure as living as you please), reveals his vagabond nature. This child of the Latin Quarter, who went through all the vicissitudes of life, who starved, stole, was imprisoned, tortured, and stood face to face with the gallows, brought forth in his works a veritable treasure of original and tender lyricism. He is the most original and independent poet of the transition period from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and the first prominent and artistic representative of that quintessence of French spirit called *gauloiserie*. François Villon expresses for the first time the lively, bold, mocking, and sometimes sad, popular idiom, in verse coming from the depths of the soul and laden with the weight of misery.

The place of this man "de povre et petite extrace" is foremost among the poets of France. "One sees the wings of the poet," says Nisard, "sprouting under the rags of the beggar." This copious ballad-maker, fed on free repasts, is preoccupied especially with the idea of death. He is the last of those poets who have sung of God, of their lady, of their

¹ Allusion to the harsh words spoken by Louis XI to Charles of Orleans and which are said to have hastened his death. What the actual words were is not known. Claude de Seyssel simply says: "Le roi le contemna de paroles sans avoir égard à la majesté de sa vieillesse ni à sa loyauté. Dont, de regret qu'il en eut . . . il finit sa vie dedans deux jours." The freeing of the first modern poet refers to the release of Villon from prison, when Louis XI passed through Meung.

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naïve and rude passions, always with a profound melancholy, with a feeling of the shortness of joy and the long duration of pain—and “death at the end of it all,” as Shakespeare has it. Jules Lemaitre writes: “Love and Death were Villon’s muses. I dare say that he was the purest, the most precise, the most classic in form, of all our poets before the seventeenth century, and in the main, the most ‘personal’—the only one—before the Romanticists.”

His poems express constant rejuvenation and the accent of truth throughout his writings makes their charm and their merit. He shows himself without mask and without pretence in the frank expression of his wrongdoings and his regrets. His poetry, Gaston Paris notes, is essentially lyric, in the sense which the modern critic usually applies to the word—reflecting as clearly as possible the soul of the poet in his verses; not any poet has surpassed Villon in this respect; nay, not any poet has equaled him, will never perhaps equal him in one thing—in his absolute sincerity.

Villon is a creature of a transition period, but with respect to the basis of his poetry he belongs no longer to the Middle Ages. According to Lanson he is entirely modern—the first poet who is frankly, completely modern.¹ These verses, and the things they contain, proceed from the very depth of the experience and the feelings of the man; they express his inmost sensibilities. Here we have a poetry which is the outcry of a poor soul stricken with abject misery—and that alone. In this voice, mocking and plaintive by turns—which cries out its pain or its vice—there sounds sometimes the cry of eternal humanity. We feel it, and it is this which makes him great.

The best known of Villon’s verses are still widely read and quoted. His works were very popular. After the first edition, edited shortly after his death, there appeared between the years 1498 (edited by Marot) and 1542, twenty-seven new ones.² Villon’s poems show his melancholic gayety and vivacity of mind, his scintillating wit and his impetuous-

¹ Boileau in his *Art poétique* says:

Villon sut le premier, dans ces siècles grossiers,
Débrouiller l’art confus de nos vieux romanciers.

² See Moscher’s English edition.

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ity of speech as well as clearness and grace. The *Petit Testament*, written in 1456 when Villon prepared to depart for Angers, to implore the generosity of an uncle supposed to be rich, is in the form of legacies. He first announces his departure, and, believing the voyage to be long and perilous, pretends to dispose of his worldly possessions. He mentions his friends from all ranks in life—the grave functionary of parliament as well as the professional thief. He wills to his solicitor a ballad, by way of payment; to his tavern keeper, his debts; to his barber, his hair; to a drunkard, his empty barrel; to a very fat friend, two recipes to reduce his embonpoint; and to grandmother earth, his body, etc.

His *Grand Testament*, written in 1461, shows his remarkable ability and is the first example in European literature of a poetry profoundly and entirely personal. Among the most touching verses in the *Grand Testament* is a prayer to the Virgin for his mother:

Dame du ciel, régente terrienne
 Emperière des infernaux palus,
 Recevez moi, votre humble chrétienne,
 Que comprise soie entre vos élus,
 Ce nonobstant qu'onceques rien ne valus.
 Les biens de vous, ma dame et ma maîtresse;
 Sont trop plus grans que je ne suis pécheresse;
 Sans lesquels biens âme ne peut merir,
 N'entrer es cieulx, je n'en suis menteresse:
 En cette foy, je vueil vivre et mourir.

HIS MOTHER'S SERVICE TO OUR LADY

Lady of Heaven and earth, and therewithal
 Crowned Empress of the nether clefts of Hell,—
 I, thy poor Christian, on thy name do call,
 Commending me to thee, with thee to dwell,
 Albeit in naught I be commendable.
 But all mine undeserving may not mar
 Such mercies as thy sovereign mercies are;
 Without the which (as true words testify)
 No soul can reach thy Heaven so fair and far.
 Even in this faith I choose to live and die.

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Unto thy Son say thou that I am His,
And to me graceless make Him gracious.
Sad Mary of Egypt lacked not of that bliss,
Nor yet the sorrowful clerk Theophilus,
Whose bitter sins were set aside even thus
Though to the Fiend his bounden service was.
Oh, help me, lest in vain for me should pass
(Sweet Virgin that shalt have no loss thereby!)
The blessed Host and scaring of the Mass.
Even in this faith I choose to live and die.

A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old,
I am, and nothing learn'd in letter-lore.
Within my parish cloister I behold
A painted Heaven where harps and lutes adore,
And eke an Hell whose damned folk see the full sore:
One bringeth fear, the other joy to me.
That joy, great Goddess, make thou mine to be,—
Thou of whom all must ask it even as I;
And that which faith desires, that let it see.
For in this faith I choose to live and die.

O excellent Virgin Princess! thou didst bear
King Jesus, the most excellent comforter,
Who even of this our weakness craved a share
And for our sake stooped to us from on high,
Offering to death His young life, sweet and fair.
Such as He is, Our Lord, I Him declare.
And in this faith I choose to live and die.

Into this *Testament* Villon incorporated a large number of his older ballads, a genre he brought to perfection in the *Ballade des Dames du temps jadis* (Ballad of Old-Time Ladies), and the *Ballade des Pendus* (Ballad of the Hanging), the “Epitaph in Form of a Ballad,” which the poet composed in the prison of Meung-sur-Loire, when he and his companions were under condemnation of death by hanging:

Frères humains, qui après nous vivez
N'ayez les cueurs contre nous endureiz,
Car si pitié de nous pauvres avez,
Dieu en aura plus tost de vous merciz;

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Vous nous voyez cy attachez, cinq, six,
 Quant de la chair, que trop avons nourrie,
 Elle est pièça dévorée et pourrie,
 Et nous, les os, devenons cendre et pouldre,
 De notre mal personne ne s'en rie,
 Mais priez Dieu que tous nous veuille absouldre.

Se vous clavons frères, pas ne devez
 Avoir desdaing, quoy que fusmes occis
 Par justice; toustefois vous mesmes scavez
 Que tous hommes n'ont pas bon sens assis;
 Intercedez doncques, de cueur rassis,
 Envers le Filz de la Vierge Marie,
 Que sa grâce ne soit pour nous tarie,
 Nous préservant de l'infemale fouldre;
 Nous sommes mors, âme ne nous harie,
 Mais priez Dieu que tous nous veuille absouldre.

La pluye nous a buez et lavez,
 Et le soleil desséchez et noirciz,
 Pies, corbeaulx, nous ont les yeux cavez,
 Et arraché la barbe et les sourceilz,
 Jamais nul temps nous ne nous sommes rassis
 Puis çà puis là, comme le vent varie,
 (A son plaisir) sans cesser nous charie,
 Plus becquetez d'oyseaulx que dez à couldre;
 Hommes ici n'usez de mocquerie
 Mais priez Dieu que tous nous veuille absouldre.

Prince Jesus, qui sur tous seigneurie,
 Garde qu'Enfer n'ayt de nous la maistrie;
 A luy n'ayons que faire ne que souldre;
 Ne soyez donc de nostre confrairie,
 Mais priez Dieu que tous nous veuille absouldre.¹

¹ Men, brother men, that after us yet live,
 Let not your hearts too hard against us be;
 For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
 The sooner God shall take of you pity.
 Here are we five or six strung up, you see,
 And here the flesh that all too well we fed
 Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
 And we the bones grow dust and ash withal;
 Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
 But pray to God that He forgive us all.

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Villon's charming *Ballad of Old-Time Ladies*, has invited more than one eminent poet to translate it into English :

Dites-moi, où n'en quel pays
Est Flora, la belle Romaine;
Archipiada ni Thaïs,¹
Qui fut sa cousine germaine;
Echo, parlant quand bruit on mène
Dessus rivière ou sur étan,
Qui beauté eut trop plus qu' humaine;
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law; yet know that all alive
Have not wit alway to walk righteously;
Make therefore intercession heartily
With Him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That His grace be not as dry a well-head
For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall;
We are dead; let no man harry or vex us dead,
But pray to God that He forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
Our beards and eyebrows; never we are free,
Not once, to rest; but here and there still sped,
Driven at its wild will by the wind's change led,
More pecked of birds than fruits on garden-wall;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
But pray to God that He forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed;
We have naught to do in such a master's hall;
Be not ye therefore, of our fellow head,
But pray to God that He forgive us all.

¹ Archipiada was the wife of Crates, a Greek cynic philosopher. Thaïs was a famous courtesan of Athens, and mistress of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.

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Où est la très sage Heloïs,
Pour qui fut châtré et puis moine
Pierre Abailart ¹ à Saint Denys?
Pour son amour eut cette essoyne.
Semblablement où est la royne ²
Qui commanda que Buridan
Fust jeté en un sac en Seine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

La Royne Blanche ³ comme un lis,
Qui chantait à voix de sirène,
Berte aux grands pieds ⁴ Bietris, Allis;

Harembourges ⁵ qui taint le Maine,
Et Jehanne, la bonne lorraine,
Qu' Anglais brulèrent à Rouen:
Où sont-ilz, Vierge souveraine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

¹ Abélard taught philosophy on Mount Ste. Geneviève, where his disciples came to hear him. The philosophers of the Schools were his enemies, holding opinions opposed to his. Abélard was much admired by the Abbé Fulbert, who liked to discuss philosophy with him. But the Abbé had a niece, and, in spite of his philosophy, Abélard fell in love with her. As a result of this passion for Héloïse, the Abbé, filled with fury, had a degrading mutilation inflicted upon the philosopher. Then Abélard—ill, sad, and tired of life—became a monk. The unhappy Héloïse, suffering as much as her unfortunate lover, also entered a monastery. In 1817 the ashes of both lovers were placed in a mausoleum built for them in the Père-Lachaise cemetery in Paris. For an original and unconventional view of Abélard's conduct, the reader is referred to an essay in the collected works of Mark Twain. The lover of Héloïse is therein pitilessly impaled on the shaft of a caustic humor. It is Mark Twain in his serious vein, and at his best.

² Jeanne, wife of Philip the Fair. A legend connects the philosopher Jean Buridan with the debauches of Jeanne de Navarre in the Tower of Nesle.

³ Queen Blanche, of Castile, mother of Louis IX, the saint.

⁴ "Bertha of the Big Feet," according to tradition the mother of Charlemagne.

⁵ Harembourges was the daughter of the Comte du Maine.

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Prince, n'enquérez de semaine
Où elles sont, ni de cet an,
Que ce refrain ne vous remaine:
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan? ¹

Of these ballads Ferdinand Brunetière writes: Is there anything more grewsome than the "Ballad of the Hanging"? of more vivid coloring than *La Grosse Margot*? a more naïve conception than the ballad which Villon made at the request of his mother? and since one cannot mention Villon without recalling it—is there anything more human in melancholy

¹ Tell me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thaïs,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloïse, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde, the lady of Maine,—
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then?
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword,—
But where are the snows of yester-year?

—Translation by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

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than the "Ballad of Old-Time Ladies"? But, adds M. Brunière, it is not Villon who has been imitated. Those who created a school are the "great rhetoricians": Jean Meschinot, Jean Molinet, Guillaume Cretin—the Raminagrobis¹ of Rabelais—Jean Marot, Lemaire de Belges. Already prosaic in the hands of Alain Chartier, poetry in their hands became pretentiously didactic. Did they themselves realize it, and not being able to create beautiful poetry, is it for that reason they made it artificial by overloading it with infinite complications and deplorable ornaments?"

Whatever Villon may have been—perhaps more sinned against than sinning—his soul must have retained purity to find such expression. His beautiful ballads when once heard, leave their rhythm in our memories. Swinburne has crowned him "Prince of All Ballad Makers":

Bird of the bitter, bright, gray golden morn
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born,
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
When song newborn put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
Villon, our sad, bad, glad, mad brother's name!

Alas! the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light frame
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
Villon, our sad, bad, glad, mad brother's name!

¹ A word used to ridicule a conceited man. Name given by La Fontaine to an old cat.

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Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad, bad, glad, mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a god thy sire;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad, bad, glad, mad brother's name.

—ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RENAISSANCE

FOR more than two centuries the literature of France suffered from inertia: the age of chivalrous poetry was over, people no longer cared for the insipid allegories, the mysteries had been forbidden, the *conte* in verse had completely disappeared, and literature took the form of prose in the *nouvelle* imitated from the Italian—a special genre of the fifteenth century. It was introduced into France with the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* by Antoine de La Salle in imitation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

The *Monologue* is also a production of this century, and the *Franc Archer de Bagnolet*, written by a canon of Reims, is its principal exponent. An entire literature for and against women, occupied many writers, an example of which is the tiresome and prolix *Champion des Dames* (The Champion of Women), by Martin Le Franc, written about 1442, in imitation of the *Roman de la Rose*, and which was reprinted in 1530 by Galliot du Pré. In 1542 Gratien du Pont wrote a long poem harshly censuring women, called *Controverses des Sexes masculin et féminin* (Controversies of the Masculine and Feminine Sexes).

The Renaissance movement gave a new impetus to this languishing state and wrought great changes in the literature of France. Italy was the cradle of the Renaissance—the great literary, artistic, and philosophical movement which was called into life about the middle of the fourteenth century, and which spread throughout Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Three great historical facts prepared the way: the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453; the wars under the French kings in Italy; and the great discoveries of the fifteenth century.

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After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Constantinople became the center of all that was left of Roman culture and learning in the West until it was captured by the Turks. Many Greek and Latin scholars living in Constantinople, among them the famous Lascaris, fled to Italy and carried with them rich spoils of the Greek literature, intellectual treasures of the languages, politics, philosophy, and religious beliefs of antiquity. These savants opened schools in Rome, Venice, and Milan, and interpreted the great writers of Greece and Rome: Plato, Sophocles, Aristotle, Euripides, Virgil, Horace, Terence, etc., to numbers of students from all parts of Italy. Italy's great writers: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and others, made known these works of antiquity, and brought to light many old manuscripts which they had found in the archives of convents. The first one to break with the mediæval traditions was Petrarch. He founded a new school to trace the origins of the great Latin writers to their very sources. The basis of almost all of the new school of poetry in France and England as well as Italy is due to him. The Este of Ferrara, the Medici of Florence—Leon X, a pope of that brilliant family, encouraged exploration in the domain of antiquity. Their liberality was unbounded in the protection of savants, artists, and humanists.¹ Paul III,² Sixtus V,³ men of profound politics and statesmanship, were great patrons of literature, art, and reform. Poggio, Angelo, Poliziana, Pico de la Mirandola, Machiavelli, Bembo, and the learned printers of the family of Alde—popularized by their

¹ Humanists were scholars who at the Revival of Learning in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries devoted themselves to the study of the language, literature, and antiquities of Rome, and afterwards of Greece.—Murray.

² Paul III (Alessandro Farnese) was pope, 1534–49. He excommunicated Henry VIII of England in 1538; in 1545 he convoked the Council of Trent.

³ Felice Peretti, Pope of Rome, 1585–90. He determined the number of cardinals to be seventy. "Elected as successor of Gregory XIII because the cardinals thought him near death as he walked, bent up, leaning on a staff. It is said that as soon as the vote was assured, he arose with such a brisk movement that he made his neighbors draw back, threw away his staff, raised his head, and intoned the *Te Deum* in a voice that made the window panes of the hall rattle."—Larousse, *Encycl.*

THE RENAISSANCE

translations and publications the master-works of Greek and Latin literature.

The expeditions into Italy repeated under three kings (Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I), put the French in touch with the antique treasures. Italy preceded France by half a century on the road of Renaissance, but she did not feel this renewed impulse so strongly as France did, having always been brilliant and civilized with her majestic monuments, her even more majestic ruins, and with a home culture which had never quite broken with classical tradition. Nor did the Renaissance produce so tremendous and radical a change as in France, where the new sources of inspiration for poetry, thought, and science caused an agitation and upheaval heretofore unequaled in the annals of her history.

For the literature of France the renewed study of Greek and Roman culture meant a rupture with the Celtic past. The old French literature was strictly a national literature, for even the *chansons de geste* which treated of classical antiquity were depicted in true French spirit. With the Renaissance, the doctrine of humanism and hellenism espoused by writers and thinkers found expression in their works.

The third great factor to further this movement, which excited and emancipated the human mind, was the succession of remarkable discoveries. The discovery of America, the Copernican Revolution, the art of engraving (1422), and above all the invention of printing by Gutenberg,¹ all these gave an impetus to scientific research. The art of printing multiplied and diffused the master-works of ancient genius heretofore inaccessible because of their rarity and cost. The humanists found most puissant auxiliaries in printing, which spread their works throughout Europe, and in the protection

¹ It is said that Gutenberg had seen at Venice, at the house of Pamphilo Castaldi de Feltre, certain little wooden sticks used by the Chinese in printing, which Castaldi had received from Marco Polo, the famous Venetian traveler and author. It was Marco Polo who gave Columbus the idea of seeking the Indies in the West. Marco Polo is thus possibly the prime cause of the two greatest discoveries of the modern world. Mendel, an Alsatian monk, had already devised characters to be used in printing, but he concealed his discovery.

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of the sovereigns.¹ It was Charles VIII who introduced the Renaissance into France. The masterpieces revealed to him in his expedition into Italy had incited his admiration. Under Louis XII the new movement found a firm footing, but to Francis I is accorded the honor of having brought the Renaissance to a flood. It triumphed under him: scholastic literature was replaced by the critical studies of ancient texts, even those of the Bible, and a Latinized language clear and flexible took the place of the stiff and deficient language of old. Francis I was called the Protector, the Father of Letters and of Arts. He addressed himself to the scholars of all Europe; he made them generous offers to attract them to his court; and the *littérateurs*, the scholars, the artists he encouraged with his gifts were numberless.

Guillaume Budé, the "prodigy of France," the disciple of Janus Lascaris, was called by Francis I to his court. Budé was one of the most profound Hellenists of the century, and was therefore vigorously and constantly attacked by the Sorbonnists. He wrote the *Commentaires sur la langue grecque*, a treatise *De Asse* on the coinage of the Greeks and Romans, and on classical learning, *Annotations sur les Pandectes*, and the *Lettres grecques*. In his work he showed that science is not an obstacle, but rather a road to the faith; that ancient philosophy is a sort of preparation to the study of the Gospel. He occupied many important positions under Francis I and profited by his influence with that king in founding the *Collège de France*.² In spite of the remonstrances of the Sorbonne and of Parliament, the chairs of Hebrew, Greek and Latin were established, to which were added those of Mathematics, Medicine, and Philosophy.

¹ Henry VII of England encouraged Italian poets to live at his court. Mathias Corwin, King of Hungary, was a great patron of art and literature and the Hungarian Renaissance dates from his reign.

² First called the College of the King and then the College of the Three Languages, after the chairs of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin had been established. Under Louis XIII it was known as the Royal College and during the Revolution as the National College. Napoleon created a chair of Turkish and changed the name to Imperial College. Under the Restoration it became the College of France and chairs of Sanskrit and Chinese were established. Now it is the College of France, with forty-two professors, and its free instruction includes the entire field of learning.

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Many famous scholars added to the reputation of this college; among them were: Vatable or Wastbled, professor of Hebrew, editor of the famous *Bible de Vatable*, condemned by the Sorbonne; Danès, professor of Greek, distinguished orator, philosopher, and mathematician; Jean Dorat, master of Ronsard and poet of the *Pléiade*; Denis Lambin, the savant philologist, whose slow manner of working gave the word *lambiner* to the French language. Next to Budé must be placed Robert and Henry Estienne, father and son. Robert was the first to print Bibles in France, and his orthodoxy soon became suspected. Henry Estienne,¹ workingman and man of letters, sought his recreation in the composition of his "Treasury of the Greek Language," and in launching ardent pamphlets, written in the vernacular, which attracted attention throughout all Europe. Under the title of "Apology for Herodotus," he published a lively and strange satire on the customs, prejudices, and excesses of his time. Besides encouraging the scholars, the kings of France had invited Italian artists to their courts; Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarte, were great favorites. The Castles of Amboise, Chenonceau, Blois and others were built by Italian architects. Through the influence of Catherine de Medici, the Italian language had been introduced into the French court, and Henri Estienne² in his *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage français italianisé*, protested against this invasion, and criticised it as the doctrine of humanism carried too far. In this criticism nothing escaped his pitiless fervor; the vices, crimes, perversities, absurdities, hypocrisies and superstitions, all were exposed and depicted without reserve. He was banished from France. For Francis I, although he protected the new movement, created the censorship and decreed the

¹ Of Henry Estienne, Ronsard sang the famous toast:

"Verse, et verse, et reverse encore	Fill and fill and fill again this
Dedans cette grande coupe d'or.	great cup of gold; I would drink
Je veux boire à Henri Estienne,	to Henry Estienne, who from
Qui des enfers nous a rendu	Hades brought back to us the
Du vieil Anacréon perdu	sweet, lost lyre of old Anacreon.
La douce lyre téienne."	

² To him is attributed the famous proverb: "A brebis tondue Dieu mesure le vent" (God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb).

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death penalty against every author of works published without his authority. Under his reign Louis de Berquin¹ and Estienne Dolet² were burned at the stake.

Another victim of fanaticism and ignorance was Ramus (Pierre La Ramée). His crime consisted in writing against peripateticism. Since the twelfth century the doctrines of Aristotle had been introduced into France as supreme authority. The ignorant believed that Aristotle was a king of the Middle Ages, and even the learned stood in religious awe of him. In his work *Dialecticas partitiones et Aristotalicæ animadversiones*, Ramus attacked the obscurity of Aristotle's philosophy and asserted that his logic was false. In proclaiming reason and not authority the criterion of truth, Ramus was the precursor of modern philosophy.

After long and laborious researches these men, martyrs to their cause, conquered barbarism and ignorance, and cleared the path for the succeeding writers. In France the Renaissance predominated until the death of Francis I (1547), and paved the way for the Reformation,³ the religious revolution in the second half of the century. In this period, under the sons of Henry II (Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III), this great religious question plunged France into eight civil wars, beginning with the massacre of Vassy in 1562 and ending with the Edict of Nantes in 1598 under Henry IV, by which freedom of religious worship was given to the Protestants.

The founder of the Reformation in France was Calvin. Jean Chauvin, called Calvin, born in 1509, at Noyon in Picardy, was destined for the church. He was made a

¹ De Bèze wrote: "Louis de Berquin might have been the Luther of France had Francis been a Frederick of Saxony."

² Of Dolet it was said: "He had French talent, Latin genius, universal erudition, and courage that never failed." Francis I ordered the massacres of Mérindol and Cabrières, two cities occupied by the Waldensians, members of a reforming body of Christians—followers of Peter Waldo of Lyons—organized about 1170. Their chief seats were in the Alpine valleys of Piedmont, Dauphiné, and Provence; hence the French name, *Vaudois des Alpes*, or *Vaudois*. By order of Francis I over three thousand were slain.

³ Michelet says of the Reformation and its spirit: "Luther sang: a great audacity indeed at that epoch when humanity scarcely dared to breathe. That mournful picture of Holbein gives an exact idea of the time: a lean tiller of the soil leading two lean horses, followed by Death."

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chaplain at the age of twelve (there were bishops and cardinals at five and eight years). He studied theology in Paris, and there wrote a Latin discourse for the rector Nicolas Cop, which expressed approval of the doctrine of justification by faith. This created a great scandal. Calvin, obliged to flee, led the life of a fugitive for almost two years. During this time he visited the court of Queen Marguerite of Navarre where many dissenters took refuge, among them: Marot, Roussel, and Bonaventure Despériers. In 1534, Calvin embraced Protestantism and a year later he finished his famous *Institution of the Christian Religion*, a *Summa theologiae* designed to fix the new doctrine, and to prevent Protestantism from becoming free thought. It is a code in which all is foreseen, all is defined, all is as narrowly confined as possible, and all reduced to one sole and central idea. That idea is that God is all, and man is nothing. From this postulate, with its consequences and conclusions, Calvin deduced Protestantism as he understood it. All his theology, all his arguments, all his morality, rest on that foundation. It was a profession of faith and a manifesto with a celebrated preface addressed to Francis I. It established the French Reformation, but Calvin was once more obliged to leave the country. The following year he was called to Geneva to teach theology. Farel, from Dauphiné,¹ convinced of Calvin's ability, persuaded him to accept the

¹ Farel, born near Gap, in Dauphiné, in 1489, was a noted French reformer and itinerant preacher in Switzerland. In 1530 he introduced the Reformation into Neuchâtel, and settled in Geneva in 1532. In spite of a bitter and protracted opposition, he brought about the establishment of the Reform Movement by the Genevan Great Council on August 27, 1535. The lords of the province of Dauphiné bore three dolphins on their crest, hence the name. Humbert II, Dauphin de Viennois, ceded the Dauphiné to Philip of Valois on condition that the eldest son of the kings of France should be called the Dauphin. Apropos of heirs apparent, it is interesting to note the origin of the title of Prince of Wales: The land of Wales never wanted to submit to England, which made all efforts to overcome the antipathy of the province. At last, the people of Wales declared that if a chief were given to them who did not speak a word of English, and had never committed an evil action, they would accept him. Accordingly, when a son was born to the King of England, the infant, who obviously fulfilled these requisites, was declared to be the chief of the Welsh clans. Since that time the oldest son, heir presumptive, of the kings of England, has borne the title of Prince of Wales.

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mission to reform the city. Once pledged to the task, Calvin gave himself to it entirely. He exercised an absolute authority: he reorganized the whole government giving it a political constitution; he imposed his confession of faith and his interpretation of it; the family and their habits were regulated by law even as to their mode of dressing and the table expenditures. At the end of eighteen months the city, exasperated by his pious tyranny, drove him away; two years later it recalled him. Calvin returned, took his place again in no-wise changed. He persecuted the hardened ones in the name of the law, in the name of the gospel; he had them judged, sentenced, executed, without hesitation, without compunction. He believed that he alone knew the truth, possessing the absolute right to repress and punish error. One of the victims of his intolerance was Michel Servet, or Servetus,¹ who was burned at the stake. Calvin used, as matter for his condemnation, friendly controversy of theological questions on which they differed. Another victim was Jacques Gruet who was decapitated. During twenty-four years—from September, 1541, till the day when it was written on the registers of the city: "May 27, 1564, Jean Calvin has departed to God"—he exercised an absolute sway. His power to keep enforced a growing body of ecclesiastical ordinances made Geneva the citadel of Protestantism. The exiles of all countries flocked there, especially the French; but all had to bend before the law of the reformer.

At the age of thirty-one Calvin married: this was, as it were, a necessity for every chief of the reformers—the pledge of a definite rupture with the Roman Church. (Erasmus says on this subject: "With them it ends, as in a comedy, with marriage.") Calvin had to yield to the solicitations of his

¹ Michael Servetus, born in Spain in 1511, was a controversialist and a physician. He published at Hagenau, in 1531, an essay directed against the doctrine of the Trinity, entitled *De Trinitatis erroribus*, which attracted great attention: Afterwards he studied theology at Louvain. In 1553 he published *Christianismi Restitutio*, which caused him to be arrested by order of the inquisitor-general at Lyons. He made his escape, but he was apprehended at the instance of Calvin at Geneva, on his way to Naples, and was burned after a trial for heresy which lasted from August 14 to October 26, 1553.

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friends, and he resigned himself to matrimony. He married Idelette de Bure, the widow of an Anabaptist whom he had converted.

Calvin, notes Paul Albert, worked with a somber, collected, indefatigable energy. Among his contemporaries there were men like Ulrich von Hutten, Dolet, Rabelais, who greeted the returning light with transports of joy; who were, so to speak, intoxicated with the sight of all the treasures which antiquity brought, and plunged into it headlong. Calvin, on his part, remained master of his science; he dominated it, he assigned to it a determined purpose. It was for him a means, not an end. In founding the Church of Geneva, he founded at the same time the school and the academy, and thus set an example which has become a law. This was one of the most powerful means of action in Protestantism, and in the procedure which Calvin adopted, science is necessary, but it must be subordinated to faith. The Christian must be in a position to read and interpret the sacred books; but he is forbidden to find in them anything save what Calvin finds in them. Calvin's personal taste would lead him to write in Latin; but to spread his writings among the masses he employed the French language—the language of his commentaries on the Scriptures of his more than three thousand sermons. Often he even published the same work in both languages; this he did notably in the case of his *Christian Institution*—his life work. It is divided into four books, the general titles of which are: *Of the Knowledge of God; Of God the Redeemer; Of the Means of Participating in the Grace of Christ; Of the Exterior Means of Aid to Salvation* (by which he understood the church, the sacraments, the polity). The basis on which Calvin established his whole doctrine is the principle of justification founded not upon works, but on the grace of God through the blood of Christ.¹ This is the point of departure and the end. All

¹ It is the doctrine that men are saved by the blood of Christ: their works avail them nothing. Christ died for them, and He alone can save them. The Catholic believes that he can save himself: he is commanded to do good to redeem his sins. But the Catholic is also asked to implore the divine grace, and to follow the injunction of Christ: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

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religion, since creation, is reviewed, explained, demonstrated from this point of view. There is no deviation or halting; but a steadfast, regular progress, an imposing gradation, a powerful and simple concentration. Calvin commands respect, not sympathy. His is an energetic, profound soul, a strong intelligence, a mind with a limited horizon. Fanatics are all such, and Calvin is one of the most perfect types of fanaticism. His admirers would discover under this rigidity a depth of feeling—even a tender and compassionate heart. This is an illusion: he was hard and dry, and he walked with a high authority. The style is like the man—rigid, firm, without abandon, without illumination. “*Ce style si triste*,” as Bossuet called it. This eloquence so grave and so rigorous brought about the divorce of the Renaissance and the Reformation.

Although the Renaissance and the Reformation—two widely different movements—were united against a common cause—the traditions of the Middle Ages—the Renaissance triumphed and the Reformation suffered defeat. Catholicism was almost unconquerable in France. Its history was amalgamated with the most ancient national French traditions. Clovis had become master of Gaul only by virtue of the support of the orthodox bishops; he had been consecrated at Reims, and the consecration was, so to speak, the very condition of royal authority.¹ Since the eighth century, the

¹ After the battle of Tolbiac, Clovis and three thousand of his soldiers were baptized. The legend says that during the commotion of Clovis's baptism, the clerk charged to bring the holy oil to anoint the royal head found himself separated from the suite by the multitude and could not approach the sacred font. The moment of christening had come. Having blessed the baptismal water, the archbishop (Remi) called for the oil with which to mix it, but in vain. Then he began to pray, his eyes and hands uplifted to heaven. A deep anxiety oppressed the spectators. Suddenly a dove with snowy plumage fluttered in the air, and hovered over the prelate, holding in its beak a little vial containing the holy oil. The bishop then administered the sacrament of baptism, saying: “King, by the grace of God thou art the anointed of the Lord; instituted by His representative on earth. The throne is supported by the altar.” All the French kings were crowned at Reims. Henry III said while placing the crown on his head, “It pricks me”; Louis XVI, “It is in my way” (*elle me gêne*). The Ampulia (holy vial) is preserved in the Cathedral of Reims.

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alliance of the church and the Carolingian kings was pledged, and this is the foundation of the temporal power¹ of the popes. Pépin the Short having been anointed king by Pope Stephen II, assisted him against Aistulf, King of the Lombards, and gave to the Pope the exarchate of Ravenna and the Pentapolis. Thus he laid the foundation of the Papal States. Charlemagne confirmed this alliance and upheld Christendom against the Saracens. The Crusades originated in France. All during the Middle Ages the authority of the Holy See was never attacked. Political influence which brought about the controversies between Philip IV and Boniface VIII, and later the Great Schism² in no way changed the submission of the people to the church. The monastic orders,³ powerful organizations placed their wealth and their soldiers at the disposition of the sovereigns, their banners waved beside the royal oriflamme. The Catholic Church had

¹ Christ said to St. Peter: "Thou art the rock, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ said also to St. Peter: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be loosed in heaven; whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be bound in heaven." It is on this authority that Catholics base confession and absolution. The church had to struggle against the temporal power of its adversaries, and so it seemed necessary that it should have not only spiritual authority but also temporal forces at its disposal. This is the origin of the temporal power of the popes, and Catholicism's justification for it.

² There were two Great Schisms or dissensions. One existed in the Catholic Church from 1378-1417, when there were several popes at the same time in Avignon and in Rome. The Council of Constance and the election of Martin V put an end to it. The other Schism was between the Latin and Greek churches and began in the ninth century owing to some doctrinal difficulty and ended in a final division in 1054 between Pope Leo IX and the Patriarch Michael Cerularius.

³ Originating as far back as St. Martin, Apostle of the Gauls, founder of the first convent at Marmoutier, an abbey in Touraine. In 372 A.D., St. Martin, desirous of securing for himself a retreat outside of the city, had a monastery built two miles distant. At first there were only a few wooden cells, but his disciples increased rapidly. The original name was Majus Monasterium, corrupted into Marmoutier. In 853 this monastery was destroyed by the Normans, but the Count of Touraine had it rebuilt. It is said to have been the first convent in Western France, and a more important one than that which St. Martin had built at Ligugé in Poitou. Owing to the recent anti-Catholic laws in France it is now abandoned.

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always been in complete possession of the arts and sciences and its highest authority in matters of religion, after the Pope and the Councils,¹ was invested in the University of Paris and in the Sorbonne.

During a period of one thousand years, writes a French critic, one can discover only now and then—as in the *Roman de la Rose*, in the *Renart*, in the fabliaux—some witty attacks on the churchmen, especially the monks. But the Gallic fervor which exercised itself at their expense never attacked the institution itself; the church seemed excellent, useful, in spite of the abuses of individual members. Finally, Catholicism in France was an edifice imposing in its massiveness and duration—an object of universal veneration, and apparently indestructible.

The Reformation therefore did not affect the faith of the great majority in France, but created the Counter-Reformation; Henry IV in order to secure his royal position was forced to embrace the Catholic faith.

¹ The Councils are assemblies of prelates who decide the more important questions concerning the church.

CHAPTER IX

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY WRITERS

WITHIN ten years the three books which were "the very soul of the century" were written: the *Pantagruel* of Rabelais, the *Christian Institution* of Calvin, and the *Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola. Each work was symbolical of the thought underlying its great question: the Renaissance, the Reformation, and Catholicism in France.

Ignace de Loyola (Inigo Lopez de Recalde), born in the castle of Loyola in Biscaya in 1491, was page at the court of Ferdinand V of Spain. In 1521, at the siege of Pampeluna, he was wounded in the leg by a cannon ball; the wound was indifferently treated, and he became lame. Loyola was the handsomest man of his day, and his mother, doubting his patience under this affliction, turned his thoughts to piety. During his convalescence a life of the Saints was placed in his hands, and, reading it, he was led to devote himself to God. He distributed his possessions among the poor. After consecrating his life to the Virgin Mary in the sanctuary at Montserrat, he went to live in a cave and subjected himself to all sorts of hardship. Upon his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he studied in the college of Montaigne. In 1534, he went to Paris and founded a society with six disciples: Pierre Lefèvre, Xaver, Rodriguez, Laynez, Bobadilla, and Salmeron, who met in a subterranean chapel of the church of Notre-Dame de Montmartre. These men devoted their lives to the conversion of infidels, and to the redemption of the fallen. Besides the vows of chastity, of poverty and obedience, they swore absolute submission to the Pope. In 1540 this order was confirmed by Pope Paul III, who gave to Loyola the Church of Jesus and named the order *Clercs réguliers de la compagnie de Jésus*, afterwards called Jesuits.

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They carried the Gospel to China, to the Indies, to America. The organization had a military character, and Loyola was elected general; nevertheless, he did not hesitate to perform most menial duties, and even the enemies of Loyola recognized his nobility, piety, and disinterestedness. He was canonized in 1622 by Gregory XV.

Rabelais, Amyot, and Montaigne stand foremost among the creators of the beautiful language of the sixteenth century, in whose learned school it became pure and wondrously enriched. A French critic says, in Rabelais, Amyot, and Montaigne, classic antiquity is brought into perfect union with the budding genius of the French race. In their language are mingled savory expressions of the vernacular and words borrowed from the Latin and Greek, forming a vehicle for the new ideas and sensations of the times. Rabelais reflects the soul of the people, powerful and trivial; Amyot those of the cultivated bourgeoisie; Montaigne of the gentleman of letters. In these three great writers the sap of the race rises, circulates with force and bursts forth into a youthful and vigorous style, full of contrast, where ideas crowd and press for expression, alive with novelty.

The same spirit which animated these great writers, penetrated all the arts and marked them with a profound imprint: music with Goudimel;¹ eloquence with Calvin and de Bèze; erudition with Henry Estienne; natural sciences with Palissy and Olivier de Serres;² poetry with d'Aubigné and Du Bartas, mémoires and pamphlets with Montluc,³ the Gascon captain, who in the leisure which, to his great regret, his age and infirmities left him, retraced with the fire of youth his exploits and his thousand adventures. With the

¹ Teacher of Palestrina, "prince of music."

² Palissy was the creator of ceramics in France. De Serres introduced the cultivation of the mulberry tree.

³ Getting into a quarrel with a passer-by, Montluc told him, furiously: "I will give you, scoundrel, such a blow with my fist that I shall hurl you into this wall, leaving only your right arm free to salute me, if perchance I honor you by passing here again." He was a noted French marshal. In the latter years of his life he dictated from memory his account of the wars from 1521 to 1574. Henry IV paid it a just tribute in calling it *La Bible du Soldat*.

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audacious courtier Brantôme,¹ who delighted in telling the infamies of his century—to which he was proud of belonging—L'Hospital, Sully,² de Thou, Pasquier, and the authors of the *Satire Ménippée*, were those magistrates and men of letters who, by their serious writings, or their satirical pamphlets protested against the follies of their contemporaries, and smoothed the road for the generations to come.

The most passionate and powerful interpreter of the spirit of the Renaissance was Rabelais. According to F. Brunetière, he was the living incarnation of the supreme idea of the Renaissance: that of the goodness or the divinity of nature. François Rabelais was born at Chinon in Touraine (between 1485 and 1500; died about 1553). At an early age he entered the Franciscan order. He studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Arabic, and the natural sciences, in spite of the interdiction of his superiors, and was therefore imprisoned. Protected by Geoffroy Mailliezais, he obtained his pardon and entered the order of the Benedictines. He left this order, too, and studied medicine in the University of Montpellier. In 1532 he received the position of doctor at the hospital in Lyons. He was obliged to write almanacs and facetious books (*Pantagruéline pronostication*) for a living, and about this time he revised an old popular novel, *Les Grandes et estimables Chroniques du grand et énorme Géant Gargantua* (The great and inestimable chronicles of the great and enormous Giant Gargantua), which had an immense success; shortly after he wrote a continuation to this novel calling it *Pantagruel*, the entire title being *Les horribles et espouvantables Faits et Prouesses du très renommé Pantagruel Roy des Dipsodes, Fils du grand Géant Gargantua, composés nouvellement par Maistre Alcofribas Nasier*. (The horrible and terrible deeds and prowesses of the much-renowned Pantagruel King of the Dipsodes, son of the great Giant Gargan-

¹ He served six kings, and certainly made his epoch known; for he tells everything, and instructs by depicting with singular truthfulness the manners, qualities, and vices of the time. His great works are *Vie des hommes illustres et des grands capitaines* and the *Vies des dames galantes*.

² It was Sully, statesman and economist, who said: "Tilling and grazing—these are the two beasts by which France is nourished—the true mines and treasures of Peru."

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tua, recently composed by Master Alcofribas Nasier.¹) He was, however, recognized as the author of this book as well as of the former novel which had been censured by the Sorbonne. To escape persecution, he went to Rome in the capacity of physician and secretary to the Cardinal du Bellay. In 1536 Rabelais received from Paul III a bull absolving him from his apostasy (his flights from the monasteries). About two years later he was practising medicine in Lyons, and then in Montpellier, where he was appointed Professor of Anatomy.² In 1539 he was physician to William du Bellay, governor of Turin.

Rabelais remodeled the chronicles entirely, and called the book *Gargantua*, which although written after *Pantagruel*, is really the First Book of Rabelais's great work. He begins with a humorous prologue addressed to the "very illustrious drinkers," and then the story tells of the birth, childhood, and education of the Giant Gargantua. Then follows a veiled satire against royal conquests in the description of the war between Grandgousier,³ the grandfather of the giant and King Picrochole, "the stupid, vainglorious, and headstrong conqueror, the crowned imbecile." One of the heroes of this war is the monk, Jean des Entommeurs, who put to flight with his cross an entire troop of soldiers. He also founded the abbey of Thelema, the motto of which was *Fais ce que voudras* (Do what thou wilt).

Pantagruel, which became the Second Book in the series, but was really written before *Gargantua*, treats of the education of Pantagruel. The lofty passages are those which concern education and morality. Rabelais insisted that physical exercise should be mixed with intellectual work, that the studies be varied, and not too exactingly long, and above all, that study should have its fountain-source in nature and not in books. Thus Rabelais invented the object lesson long before

¹ Anagram of François Rabelais.

² In the Middle Ages, and later, dissections were performed by the barbers, who were also surgeons, the professor himself never handling a knife.

³ Most of the characters have become types; thus Grandgousier, the grandfather of the giants, is the personification of the glutton; Gargantua has become proverbial as an insatiable eater; Pantagruel, as an Epicurean philosopher and a jolly companion.

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our modern pedagogues. In this book occurs the famous letter of Gargantua to Pantagruel, which has been called the *Chant triomphal de la Renaissance* (The triumphal song of Renaissance). An amusing description is given of Panurge, the man who "if he had sixty-three ways of finding money, had also two hundred and fourteen ways of spending it." The character of Panurge, says Saintsbury, "is hardly comparable to any other character in literature except Falstaff. The main idea in Panurge is the absence of morality in the wide Aristotelian sense, with the presence of almost all other good qualities."

The Third Book signed by Rabelais and preceded by a royal privilege granted in 1545, also opens with a curious prologue. The story confines itself principally to conversation, with little action. In spite of the royal privilege, this book was also censured by the Sorbonne, and Rabelais felt it prudent to take refuge in Metz where he took the position of physician in the hospital. After a year he returned to France, but with the death of Francis I, his royal protection ended and Rabelais was not yet in the good graces of Henry II. Moreover, the famous *Chambre Ardente*¹ created for the trial of heretics by the Parliament of Paris, was in session and Rabelais, who had aroused anew the indignation of the Sorbonne by his Fourth Book, fled again to Rome, where besides the Cardinal du Bellay's protection he enjoyed that of the powerful families of Guises and of Châtillon.

The Fourth Book, published about 1548, describes the adventurous voyages of Pantagruel, Panurge, and Brother Jean, who go in search of the oracle of *La Dive Bouteille* (the Divine Bottle) visiting on the way a series of fantastic islands and America. In this book the incidents of the Storm

¹ A special court of justice, by which over five hundred death sentences were passed in two years. The name *Chambre Ardente* (burning-room) was, according to some authorities, derived from the fact that the people tried there were usually condemned to be burned. Other authorities say it was so called because the room in which the tribunal sat was illuminated by many burning tapers. The most celebrated of these *Chambre Ardentes* was the one in session at the Arsenal in the seventeenth century to pass judgment on the great trial called *Affaire des poisons* (poison). The names of many people of high rank were on the files of this case, among them that of Madame de Montespan, the king's favorite, which caused Louis XIV to put an end to this court.

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and of the Frozen Words occur, and the amusing story is told of Panurge's sea voyage during which he avenges himself for an insult offered him by Dindenaut, a sheep merchant. This merchant has a flock of sheep on board. Panurge buys one of these and throws it into the sea; the rest of the flock follow, dragging with them Dindenaut and the shepherds in their vain attempt to save the flock. From this story arises the proverbial "moutons de Panurge," satirizing the imitative extravagance of the multitude.

The Fifth Book is of doubtful authority. It was published about nine years after Rabelais's death (1553), and is a continuation of the description of the voyages and fantastic islands. The travelers visit Ringing Island, the island of the Furred Cats, and of the Lanterns, and conducted by a Lantern (Learning or Study), an inhabitant of the Island of Lantern, they finally reach the Island of the Bottle. Here the priestess Bacbuc initiates them in its mysteries—"in wine is truth, good hope lies at the bottom of it"—which means, as explained by the commentators,¹ that for the conquest of science two things are necessary: God's guidance, and the society of man. Panurge receives the advice of the oracle of the Holy Bottle which is—*Trinch* (Drink).

The satirical parts of Rabelais's books are directed against the aggressive policies of the monarchs, the religious hypocrites, the charlatanism of physicians and against the insolence and ignorance of the great lords. He knew how to veil his formidable attacks with a torrent of inoffensive buffoonery and 'unintelligible allegories. No satirist ever wielded the weapon of sarcasm with such an audacious and fearless art. With his inexhaustible fund of knowledge, his gayety, his bursts of laughter, he disarmed the very one whom he had made his butt:

Mieux est de ris que de larmes escrires,
Pour ce que rire est le propre de l'homme.²

¹ The commentators of Rabelais have seen in his *Grandgousier* the personification of Louis XII; in *Gargantua*, Francis I, and in *Pantagruel*, Henry II, and many other representations under fictitious names of contemporary men and things.

² It is better to write of laughter than of tears,
For laughter is the gift of man.

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Rabelais's language is very rich and picturesque, his humor infinitely varied, and his writings show force, power of thought and a sense of morality. Often, however, he is rough and coarse, but coarseness had always been the characteristic of comic literature. La Bruyère says of him: where he is bad, he is worse than the worst, it is the charm of the *canaille*; where he is good he is exquisite.

The following legend is explanatory of the famous phrase—*quart d'heure de Rabelais*¹—denoting anxious moments: Rabelais stopped at an inn in Lyons, and, after feasting for several days, found himself, as was often the case, without a *sou* to pay his bill, and no means of returning to Paris, where he had a most important engagement. His dilemma was great, and for some moments (the "quarter of an hour") he was in despair, when suddenly he bethought himself of a plan. He placed two packages on the table in his room, labeled "poison for the king," "poison for the dauphin." The packages were soon discovered and Rabelais was arrested and dispatched to Paris, where he was brought before Francis I, to whom he explained the joke he had played on the innkeeper and gave the proof of it by swallowing the supposed poison. At which the king laughed most heartily.

No great writer is read so little, and no character in literature has been so distorted by legends² as Rabelais. To quote

¹ Used now in the more special sense of "the time to settle a bill," and especially the *addition* at a restaurant. H. J. Vetter in one of his paintings has immortalized the *quart d'heure de Rabelais*.

² "The curé of Meudon (Rabelais was curé of Meudon, a small town near Paris, for not quite one year) appears to us under that illumined mask in which he so much resembles the little King of Yvetot." See the song of Béranger (May, 1813), *Le Roy d'Yvetot*:

Il était un roi d'Yvetot

Peu connu dans l'histoire

Se levant tard, se couchant tôt,

Dormant fort bien sans gloire,

Et couronné par Jeanneton

D'un simple bonnet de coton

Dit-on.

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! ah! ah! ah! ah!

Quel bon petit roi c'était là!

La, la.

Il faisait ses quatre repas, etc.

There was a king of Yvetot,
little known to history; went to
bed early, got up late, and slept
quite well without glory—crowned
by Jeanneton with a simple cotton
night-cap, so they say.

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! ah! ah! ah! ah!

What a good little king was that!

La, la.

He ate his four meals a day,

etc.

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Professor Tilley in his excellent book on Rabelais: "In spite, however, of our scanty knowledge,¹ certain facts in his life and character stand plainly out. We must abandon the legend which represents him as a gluttonous and winebibbing buffoon, as an unfrocked priest, as a sort of ecclesiastical Falstaff. We have seen what his relations were with Guillaume and Jean du Bellay, two of the foremost men in the kingdom; we have seen how he was respected by men like Geoffroy d'Estissac, the Bishop of Maillezais, and the distinguished jurist, André Tiraqueau, and how humanists like Salmon Macrin, and Dolet, and Voulté, and Jean de Boyssonné, spoke in the highest terms of his learning and of his skill as a physician. But, perhaps, it is from the letters written to him during his sojourn at Turin by Guillaume Pellicier, Bishop of Montpellier, that we get the most convincing proof of the high regard in which he was held, not only by men of his own rank, but by those far above him in power and station, princes of the church and patrons of humanism."

For further explanation Professor Tilley introduces an extract from *Hippocratis Aphorismorum Paraphrasis Poetica*: "You will, perhaps, think the man was a buffoon and a jester, one who angled for dinner with witty speeches. No, he was no buffoon, no jester of the market place, but one who, with the penetration of a distinguished mind, laughed at the human race, its foolish wishes and credulous hopes. He passed his days free from material care, his sails ever filled with the breeze of prosperity. Nor would you find anyone more learned, when it pleased him to lay aside laughter for serious topics. . . . If a great and difficult question had to be solved by industry and learning, you would have said that he alone saw into the greatest mysteries, that to him alone were revealed the secrets of nature. . . . He was familiar with all the learning of Greece and Rome, and like a second Democritus laughed at the idle fears and hopes of populace and princes, and at the vain cares and anxious labors of this transitory life."

¹The Société des Études Rabelaisiennes was founded in 1902 for researches of Rabelais's works.

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY WRITERS

Jacques Amyot (1513-1593), very poor, very laborious, made himself the servant of the well-to-do scholars of the *Collège de France* in order to profit by the course of public lectures. It is said that he worked at night by the light of burning coal, and that every week he received a loaf of bread from his mother in Melun, through the boatmen on the Seine. By dint of privations and perseverance he learned Latin, Greek, philosophy, and mathematics, and then received the chair of Latin and Greek at the University of Bourges. Successively preceptor, doctor of letters, doctor of sciences, professor at Bourges—Francis I gave him the revenues of the Abbaye of Bellozane. Under the successors of Francis, he was named Grand Almoner of France, preceptor of the future king, Charles IX, and finally Bishop of Auxerre. Amyot said to the prince who caused the massacre of St. Bartholomew: "Our Lord has invested you with a singular goodness, inclined of itself to love, honor, and esteem everything that is virtuous. It is not true greatness to be able to do everything one can, but to aspire to all that one ought to do. The eternal law which commands princes as well as other men, is righteousness, truth, and justice." Unfortunately, Amyot had not the necessary moral authority to engrave such words on the soul of his pupil, nor were they in accord with the principles of his mother, who thoroughly dominated her son. Amyot's great work is the translation of all of Plutarch's works, but the best in that vast collection is his translation of the "Lives" of Plutarch—the classic that made Plutarch the most popular of ancient authors in France. Amyot had the advantage of writing in French and his work addressed itself to all who knew how to read.

The first classicist in France was Michel Eyquem, seigneur de Montaigne, born in 1533, in the castle of Montaigne in Périgord. According to Sainte-Beuve he was the wisest Frenchman that ever lived. His father, although a nobleman, chose as godparents for his son people of humble rank and had him brought up by peasants. Montaigne himself tells that his father's idea was to make him hardy and frugal, and to bring him in contact with the class of people who would stretch out their arms to him rather than those who would turn their backs on him. Montaigne also tells that besides

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his peasant nurse he had a German tutor, Horstanus, who spoke only Latin to him, so that at six years of age, Montaigne knew nothing of French, but had acquired Latin perfectly without rules, without books and grammars, without beatings, and without tears. At six years of age he entered the college of Guyenne in Bordeaux. Later he studied law, and at the age of twenty-three was made a councilor in the Parliament of Bordeaux. During this time he formed his friendship for Étienne de La Boétie, of which he writes: "if one should ask me why I love him, I feel I can but express myself thus: because it was he; because it was I."

Montaigne was attached to the courts of Francis II and Henry III, and witnessed the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, the violence of the League, and all the atrocities committed in the name of religion—in France the Catholics were burning the Protestants, in Geneva the Protestants were burning the Catholics. "Combien j'ai vu de condamnations plus criminelles que le crime!" (How many condemnations I have seen more criminal than the crimes!) wrote Montaigne; and at this time, when in religion, in literature, in politics, everyone said "I know all," Montaigne took for his device, "What do I know?" (Que sais-je?) With a profound knowledge of human nature and with his classical acquirements he preached skepticism. And in Montaigne's skepticism is expressed his humanity—his toleration. It is the affirmation that in this world where relatives rule it is wrong to believe oneself the infallible holder of the truth. Montaigne's skepticism proclaims the liberty of the conscience, and preserves human morality.

After visiting Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, he withdrew to his castle in Périgord, and wrote a history to which he gave the modest title of *Essais* (two volumes were published in 1580, and the third in 1588). Without pretension he writes in his introduction: "C'est icy un livre de bon foy, lecteur," and describes his work as "un parler simple et naïf tel sur le papier qu'à la bouche." (This is a book of good faith, reader, a conversation simple and unpretentious on paper as I would talk.) And he excelled in this ability to talk—an art in which no people have surpassed the French. His *Essais*, which Cardinal de Perron called the breviary of well-

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bred people, are a series of about one hundred and seven treatises in which he discusses many questions on society, literature, religion, friendship, politics, etc. It is a moral and philosophical work, the unique subject of which is Montaigne himself. It marks the beginning of a long epoch of classical French literature which influenced Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu and the Encyclopedists. Montaigne's work is the "first by virtue of seniority and glory of all those masterpieces which are part of the French genius in its striving toward the perfection of the human mind."

From an intellectual point of view Montaigne esteems ignorance. "Beaucoup savoir apporte occasion de plus douter,"¹ but, says Faguet, there are two kinds of ignorance: one elementary, which knows nothing because it does not know; the other, refined, elevated, which knows nothing after having learned everything because it has found out that to learn everything leads to knowing nothing. And the first one is the better, and the second is not bad. Hence Montaigne's famous *mot*: "Ignorance and incuriosity are a soft pillow for a well-made head."

In his religious views Montaigne was very circumspect; he never attacked any doctrine. In questions of controversy, he confined himself to arguments, but rarely gave an opinion. It has been stated that he said nothing because he knew nothing on this subject, or that he doubted everything. Professor Dowden's² symbolism with reference to this phase of Montaigne's character is striking: "Perhaps his faith wavered; perhaps he could not really check the advance of his questioning spirit at the point which seemed most convenient. The higher souls alone, he thought, know an assured belief. He at least, imperfect believer as he was, had provided, by his ingenious artistry, a defense of the faith unconceived by them. He could imagine the happier state and he would in his outward conduct conform to all the duties which such a state implies. Was he a skeptic? Perhaps so, at times, in the backshop of his mind. But he was also a Périgourdin, a Christian, a Catholic, a conservative, and as such he would behave. It

¹ "The more we know, the more we are inclined to doubt."

² See Professor Dowden's *Montaigne*.

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was as if the tower of Montaigne¹ were an allegory of the fabric of his soul. Below was the chapel with its altar, where the mass might be devoutly celebrated. Up aloft was the bell which at the appointed hour rang its *Ave Maria*. Below was the region of spiritual faith, but the place was not quite habitable. Between the two was the library, where Montaigne spent most of his days, and most of the hours of each day. It was the region of moral prudence. In the library he could think his own thoughts, or gaze at its beams and joists and ponder the sentences of a philosopher's creed; here he could be wise with a human wisdom, and Seneca and Plutarch—not the fathers of the church—were his companions." Montaigne died in 1592.

¹ Montaigne in one of his essays describes the tower, his favorite place of retreat. The first, second, and third floors were occupied by his chapel, library, and bedroom, respectively, with the belfry overhead.

CHAPTER X

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY AND PROSE

AFTER Villon, the first great lyric poet in France, poetry fell into a decadence during the period of the *grands rhétoriciens* (great rhetoricians). They were the fashion at the courts of Burgundy and Brittany and until the accession of Francis I, at the court of France. Their works were characterized by an unsuccessful imitation of the Latin, and by a vain and pretentious style. Their attempt to lead the poetical thought of a nation into an entirely strange and artificial path did not succeed, and the old form of poetry triumphed. Poetry, however, never reached sublime heights in the sixteenth century in France. Of this a French critic writes: "Lyrical poetry was represented by Clément Marot with grace but with little feeling; by the passionate poets of the Lyonnaise School (Maurice Scève, Louise Labé), who in their efforts to elevate the language by the lofty treatment of subjects lost themselves in abstraction and subtleties; by Du Bellay whose poems were sad and personal, and by Ronsard in sensual and melancholy qualities. But in general with Ronsard and the poets of the Renaissance, inspiration was suppressed by the rules of classic antiquity and poetry was more didactic than lyric. Malherbe, although lyric in form, aimed at oratory. After Malherbe, poetry was cultivated only by the second-rate poets, such as: Théophile, Maynard, Racan, the *précieux* (Voiture, Malleville, Sarrazin, Godeau, Saint-Armand, Scudéry, Scarron), who introduced into their poems more fine wit than they did feeling. And it was only in the Fables of La Fontaine and in the songs and choruses of Racine that lyric poetry reached again true beauty."

Clément Marot, "the poet of princes," was born in 1497

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at Cahors. Through the influence of his father, the poet Jean Marot, Clément was early introduced to court life. He became attached to the court of Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre, and later to that of Francis I. He followed that monarch on his expeditions, and almost all the important events of his reign are sung by Marot. Marot was constantly persecuted by the Sorbonne and being accused of heresy, he was imprisoned at various times, owing his deliverance to the intervention of Marguerite and the king. Some historians say that upon an accusation of his mistress: "*Prenz-le*, (take him,) *il a mangé le lard*,"¹ he was arrested by order of the inquisitor and imprisoned in the Châtelet. In his distress, Marot wrote Lyon Jamet a letter in which, making a funny and very piquant application of the fable of the Lion and the Mouse, he besought him to effect his liberation. Through Jamet's influence, Charles Guiart, Bishop of Chartres, who was secretly favorable to the reformers, issued in 1526 a decree of arrest against Marot, as if the poet had not already felt the hand of justice. This mandate was executed, and Marot, given over to the officers of the bishop, was transferred to Chartres, where the hostelry of the Eagle was assigned to him for a prison. Here he was visited and feasted by all the influential people of the city. This inspired the prisoner to write his celebrated *Enfer* (Hell)—a virulent satire aimed against the administrators of the law and a work by which he incurred the displeasure of Diane de Poitiers,² mistress of Francis I, whom he boldly reproached for her unbelief.

¹ Not translatable; *il a mangé le lard* was a figurative mode of speech employed to express in general "to be guilty." The phrase *Prenz-le, il a mangé le lard*, Marot uses in one of his ballads. *Manger du lard* is a slang expression meaning "to betray one's accomplices."

² Diana of Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, and first lady of honor to Queen Claude, was richly endowed by nature in mind and in body. Her father, Jean de Poitiers, Count of St. Vallier, was condemned to be beheaded; but Diana threw herself at the feet of Francis I, and by her tears and her charms obtained his pardon. But her father's hair grew white in a single night in the prison at Loches, and fear threw him into a violent fever from which he never recovered. Hence the expression "fever of St. Vallier." Diana was at least forty years old when King Henry II, barely eighteen, fell desperately in love with her; and although almost sixty years

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In 1534, Marot was implicated in the *Affaire des placards*, when all the principal streets of Paris were placarded with printed sheets attacking the Roman Catholic Church in the most offensive terms. Marot was obliged to leave Paris, and found refuge at the court of Margaret of Navarre and, during a later period, at the court of Renée de France, sister of Louis XI.

In 1536 he dedicated to Francis I his translation of the first thirty Psalms. The dedication ran:

Mais tout ainsi qu'avecques diligence
Sont éclaircis par bons esprits rusez
Les escritaux des vieux fragmens usez,
Ainsi, ô roi, par les divins esprits
Qui ont sous toy Hebrieu langage appris,
Nous sont jettez les pseumes en lumière,
Clairs, et au sens de la forme première,
Dont après eux, si peu que faire scay,
T'en ay traduit, par manière d'escay
Trente, sans plus, en ton noble langage,
Te suppliant les recevoir pour gage,
Du résidu qui ja t'est consacré,
Si les voir tous il te venoit a gré.¹

old at the death of the king, she had always held the same sway over his heart. Her charms and beauty withstood the ravages of time; every man at all distinguished in letters could count upon her protection. The reign of Henry II was that of Diana; but no sooner was that prince *in extremis* than the courtiers who had so long worshiped at her shrine turned their backs upon her. Catherine of Medici, wife of Henry II, sent orders to her to return the crown jewels and to retire from the beautiful castle of Chenonceaux to one of the less sumptuous castles. She died at the age of sixty-six, beautiful to the end. She is the only royal mistress in whose honor medals were struck. One still exists on which she is represented trampling Love under foot, with the words "*Omnium victorem vici*" (I have conquered the conqueror of all).

¹ But just as, with diligence, the writings of old worn fragments have been made clear by cunning minds; and just as, O King, the Psalms have been put in a clear light for us, and with their original meaning, by those inspired minds who learned the Hebrew tongue under you—of which writings, after them, as well as I can, I have translated, as a sort of experiment, thirty—no more—into your noble tongue, supplicating you to receive them as a pledge of the remainder, which henceforth are consecrated to you, if you would see them all.

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Marot's translation was received at the court with enthusiasm. Francis I took pleasure in humming new psalms. "With this royal example before them, the courtiers and the ladies, even the least virtuous, began to learn them by heart, and, before they were formally set to music, to sing them to the tune of current, and sometimes the most profane or burlesque, melodies." In spite of royal favor, the Sorbonne continued their persecutions, and finally prohibited the sale of this translation. Marot sought refuge in Geneva, but there, too, animosity and intolerance drove him away. He finally found protection in Turin, where he died in 1544.

His psalms, fifty in number, were published in 1543, with a preface by Calvin. They were set to music by Goudimel and almost all of them were introduced into the song books of the Calvinists. Their composition is like that of Marot's songs and epitaphs, strained and pedantic. His best works are his *épîtres*, *rondeaux*, and *ballades*, some of which are marvels of grace and wit and rhythmic harmonies. The word *Marotisme*, indicative of Marot's style, was used to designate a genre of poetry, of facile wit and melodious rhyme, without much depth or passion. This style with its archaic coloring, placed Marot as the last of the poets of the Middle Ages, and a modern poetry, artistic and erudite, was created by the *Pléiade*.

The impulse to this new school of poetry was given by a class of young scholars, nourished under the strong discipline of classical studies. Their master was Jean Dorat and one of their number—Ronsard—became the chief of the new school, and formed, with Joachim du Bellay, Rémi Bellau, Jodelle, Dorat, Baïf, and Pontus de Thiard, the French *Pléiade*.¹ The pupils of Dorat "having drunk at their leisure the strong wine of the ancient poets" learned to admire the elevation of their language and the nobility of their ideas. In 1549, Du Bellay published his *Défense et*

¹ Under Henri III. There was another French *Pléiade* under Louis XIII, composed of Rapin, Commiré, Larue, Ménage, Santeul, Duperrier, and Petit. The name *Pléiade*, an astral term taken possession of by poetry, was given to seven poets who lived in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus: Lycophron, Théocritus, Aratus, Nicander, Appolonius, Homer, and Callimachus.

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Illustration de la Langue Française, a manifesto of the new school and their programme. It furnishes the historic date of that literary movement which was prolonged during almost half a century, with Ronsard as its chief. The intention of Du Bellay was, not only to defend the common language against the contempt of the scholars, but to show that it might acquire the qualities in which it was still lacking, and by what means one might hope to elevate it to the level of Greek and Latin. He wished to enrich the French language by imitating the ancient Greek and Latin writers, and taking freely from the "sacred treasures of the Delphic temple." "The Romans," he says, "imitated the best Greek authors—transforming themselves into them, devouring them, and, after having devoured them, changing them into their own blood and nourishment." The new school, then, abandoned rondeaux, ballades, and virelais, for the cultivation of the new genres of poetry: odes, elegies, idylls, and sonnets.

Du Bellay (1525–60) is known as the most modern of poets of the sixteenth century. His poems show grace, emotion, and creative ability. The pastoral poem *Vanneur de Blé aux Vents* (Winnowers addressing the Winds) is quoted as a model of grace and poetic ease:

A vous troupe légère;
Qui d'aile passagère
Par le monde volez,
Et d'un sifflant murmure
L'ombrageuse verdure
Doucement esbranlez:

J'offre ces violettes
Ces lis et ces fleurettes
Et ces roses icy;
Ces vermeillettes roses
Tout fraîchement escloses,
Et ces ceillels aussi.

De vostre douce haleine
Esventez cette plaine,
Esventez ce séjour;

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Ce pendant que j'ahanne
A mon blé que je vanne
A la chaleur du jour.¹

Pierre de Ronsard was born in 1524 in the Castle of Possonnière, near Vendôme. His childhood and early youth were singularly active. Disgusted with school at nine years of age, he became a page at court, and passed about three years in Scotland, in the service of King James. He visited Flanders and Germany, and, at the age of nineteen returned to France, where a brilliant career awaited him. But he suddenly lost his sense of hearing which compelled him to give up court life and led him to devote himself to literature. Shipwrecks, wars, gallant adventures, knowledge of men and languages—these things he gained on his travels, and turned them to account as a poet. Proclaimed in the *Jeux Floraux*,² “prince of poets,” Ronsard also became the poet of princes.

<p>¹ To you, troop so fleet, That with winged wandering feet Through the wide world pass And with soft murmuring Toss the green shades of spring In woods and grass.</p>	<p>Lily and violet I give, and blossoms wet, Roses and dew; This branch of blushing roses, Whose fresh bud uncloses, Wind-flowers, too.</p>
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Ah, winnow with sweet breath,
 Winnow the holt and heath,
 Round this retreat;
 Where all the golden morn
 We fan the gold o' the corn
 In the sun's heat.

—Translation by ANDREW LANG.

² The Floral Plays (*Jeux Floraux*), an academy of Toulouse, was founded in 1323 by seven troubadours of Toulouse, under the name of *Très gaie Compagnie des sept troubadours de Toulouse*. Every year on the first of May a poetical contest takes place in Toulouse, and this academy distributes prizes for the best poems: the first prize a golden violet, the second a silver eglantine, and the third a marigold in metal, hence the name Floral Plays. Clémence Isaure, born in Toulouse, was noted for her mental gifts and for her patronage of young poets. She gave this institution a new impetus by providing an annual fund. After her death her statue was erected at the city hall and wreathed with flowers during the contests. The *Jeux Floraux* were reorganized at the end of the seventeenth century, and raised to the dignity of an academy, after which only French aspirants were admitted. It was suppressed in 1790, but reëstablished in 1806, and is the oldest literary society in Europe.

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Queen Elizabeth gave him a diamond of great value, and Mary Stuart sent him a rock of solid silver, with the inscription "à Ronsard, l'Apollon de la source des Muses." She received him during the brief reign of her husband, Francis II. Four kings, Henri II, Francis II, Charles IX, and Henri III, showered upon him favors and distinctions.

Ronsard was the founder of modern French poetry. He introduced for the first time the idea that form and style were necessary in the composition of verses. He was, above all, an admirable artist, and the aim he never lost sight of in his poetry and which, in the estimate of his contemporaries he achieved so well, was nobility, earnestness, and splendor of language. A large vocabulary did not exist in French, and Ronsard set to work to increase it. He created new words and rejuvenated old ones (archaisms), he tried to form a language for poetry—richer and more elevated than that used for prose. Some critics say he would have been a great poet, if not epic or lyric, at any rate elegiac, but for his great fault—his determination to suppress his personal inventive power under a balderdash of imitations. He encumbered the French language with Latin and Greek expressions, not comprehensible, as he himself writes, to the majority of the people:

Les Français qui mes vers lironr,
S'ils ne sont et Grecs et Romains,
En lieu de ce livre ils n'auront
Qu'un pesant faix entre les mains.¹

Nyrop in his defense, writes that Ronsard did not borrow more words from the ancient languages than any of the other writers of his time, and that Boileau was in error when he represented Ronsard's muse speaking Greek and Latin; he should have said, continues Nyrop, "that his muse spoke French, and thought in Greek and Latin."

Ronsard's attempt to write an epic poem, the *Franciade*, was a failure. He used an improbable legend for the subject

¹ Frenchmen who will my verses read,
Unless they be Greek and Roman (scholars),
Instead of this book will have
But a heavy load in their hands.

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matter, and imitated Virgil and Homer. It speaks of Francus, the son of Hector, who escapes from the fury of the Greeks and after a series of adventures arrives at Crete. The two daughters of the King of Crete fall in love with him. One of them, desperate with jealousy, throws herself into the sea; the other, a prophetess, discloses the future to Francus, in which he appears as the ancestor of a long line of kings in France, from the legendary Pharamond¹ to Charlemagne. The poem lacks inspiration, and Ronsard, who intended to write twelve cantos, stopped after the fourth. Ronsard's success lay in his odes, sonnets, and hymns. The following graceful "Ode," addressed to Cassandra, is expressive of his lighter manner:

Mignonne, allons voir si la Rose,
Qui ce matin avait desclose
Sa robe de pourpre au soleil,
A point perdu cette vesprée,
Les plis de sa robe pourprée,
Et son teint au vostre pareil.

Las! voyez comme en peu d'espace;
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place,
Las, las, ses beautez laissé choir!
O vraiment marâtre Nature,
Puisqu'une telle fleur ne dure
Que du matin jusques au soir.

Donc, si vous me croyez, Mignonne,
Tandis que votre âge fleuronne
En sa plus verte nouveauté,
Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse;
Comme à cette fleur, la vieillesse
Fera ternir votre beauté.²

¹ Frankish chieftain of the fifth century who, according to legend, was the first king of the Merovingian line; at all events the first Frankish king whose name—and nothing else—history has preserved.

² Come, darling, see an' if the rose,
Which did to the sun's dawn disclose
Its purple robe all freshly blown,
Has not at hour of Vespers lost
Its painted dress, its beauty's boast,
And its complexion like your own.

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Ronsard, the hero of literary reform, had many followers, and he knew, by the force of his convictions, how to hold sway over prose and poetry which, for fifty years, did not tolerate either adversaries or rivals. But now the great Ronsard "lies buried under his laurels." He died in 1585.

While Ronsard still remained supreme in poetry, and Desportes (1546-1606) and Bertaut (1552-1611) of the second generation of the *Pléiade* were reigning favorites, two poets of entirely different genius appeared on the literary horizon. The one revived the old caustic French spirit in all its frankness:

Otez votre chapeau. C'est Mathurin Régnier,
De l'immortel Molière immortel devancier.¹

Mathurin Régnier's (1573-1613) only claim to celebrity are his satires. He wrote his own epitaph, which is still celebrated:

J'ai vécu sans nul pensement,
Me laissant aller doucement,
A la bonne loi naturelle;
Et ne saurai dire pourquoi
La mort daigna songer à moi
Qui n'ai daigné songer en elle.²

Behold! alas! in how brief space,
Darling, it has upon the place
Let all its beauties pale and fade.
Stern stepdame Nature, we must chide,
Since such a flower may only bide
From morning until even shade.

Then, if you trust me, darling, while
Your tender age doth bloom and smile
In its new, fresh, unsullied dress,
Gather, oh, gather now, your youth,
Since (as this flower) age, void of ruth,
Will tarnish all your loveliness.

—Translation by Carrington.

¹ (de Musset.) Off with your hat! 'Tis Mathurin Régnier—immortal Molière's immortal predecessor.

² I have lived without thought, letting myself go gently along according to the good natural law; and I cannot say why Death has deigned to think of me who have never deigned to think of her.

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The other poet, François de Malherbe, exhibited the disciplined classical mind. He was born at Caen, in 1555, and was educated in Paris, Bâle, and Heidelberg. His odes to Henry IV, Marie de Medici, and to Du Périer, brought him popularity, and he became court poet. His ode to Du Périer, on the death of Du Périer's daughter Rose, reads:

Ta douleur Du Périer, sera donc éternelle?

Mais elle était du monde où les plus belles choses

Ont le pire destin,

Et rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses:

L'espace d'un matin.¹

But Malherbe's fame rests not on his poems, but as the initiator of the movement for purity in the French language. As critic, grammarian, and "philological legislator," he wielded an immense power, and became the "regent of Parnassus." He perfected versification; he proscribed the hiatus and the *enjambement*,² and reduced to a small number the rhythmical forms of French poetry. By the clearness of his mind and the severity of his criticism, he freed poetry from Greek and Latin "ruins," which since Du Bellay and the *Pléiade* had encumbered the language. He condemned the use of archaisms, diminutives, and provincialisms. He differentiated words, classed them, and rigorously regulated their use. Rhetoric was made purer, and the forms of style clearer for literature. He freed the language from its Gasconisms.³ He devoted his whole life to the reform of the language, and pursued his enterprise with scrupulous care, and with the persistent strength of good sense, and finally imposed upon the French tongue a strict discipline. French, in its perfected form, became the language of all the courts

¹ Will thy sorrow, then, Du Périer, be everlasting?

But she was of the world where the most beautiful things

Have the worst fate,

And a rose, she lived as long as roses live—

The space of a morn.

² The completing the sense in the next line for formal metrical effect.

³ *Dégasconna*, said Balzac; i. e., cleared the French language of its Gascon expressions.

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and literary circles of Europe. Malherbe was surnamed the "tyrant¹ of words and syllables," and established those severe precepts to which, thereafter, the talented French poets subjected their powers.

Malherbe, if severe toward others, was no less so to himself. He was an indefatigable worker, polishing and repolishing his phrases. It is said, that on one occasion, a friend of his having lost his wife, Malherbe wished to address his consolations. When he had finally finished his verses, he found his friend not only consoled, but remarried. During twenty-five of his busiest years, he wrote on an average, thirty-three verses a year. "When one asked his opinion," says Racan, "on some French word, he would generally refer you to the street porters of the Hay Market, saying that they were his authority for the language." By this he meant that the language of the people was never influenced by foreign forces,² and that the language of literature, too, should be pure and simple; in other words, French.³

In rendering poetry more simple and rational, Malherbe raised its standard to perfection, but he thereby rendered it more difficult, and, for over a century after him, there was no lyric poet of France. An epigram on Malherbe, composed by his friend Maynard, reads:

La faveur des princes est morte;
Malherbe, en notre âge brutal,
Pégase est un cheval qui porte
Les poètes à l'hôpital.⁴

"Grammarian-poet," says Sainte-Beuve, "his object above all was, like a clever artist, to restore and to string the instrument from which Corneille and Racine would draw sublime and melodious chords." Malherbe died in 1628.

¹ It is said that on his death bed, Malherbe upbraided his nurse for using a word incorrectly.

² The court had been by turns Spanish, Italian, and Gascon.

³ Ce qui n'est pas clair, n'est pas français. (Rivarol.)

⁴ The favor of princes is dead;
Malherbe, in our brutal age,
Pegasus is a horse which bears
Poets to the almshouse.

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Du Bellay in his *Défense* already quoted, advised the coming writers to restore comedies and tragedies to their ancient glory. To Estienne Jodelle (1532-73), was assigned the rôle of dramatist of the Pléiade, and he introduced tragedy into the national literature, when, at the age of twenty, he wrote *Cleopatra Captive*, in imitation of Seneca. The Italian tragedies, Rucellais's *Rosmonda*, and Trissino's *Sofonisba*, had been translated into French, but Jodelle's tragedy is important in the history of French literature as the first regular French tragedy. His work is faulty, the plan very simple, the language negligent, and the speeches interminable; but it has the merit of being the first attempt to offer a higher form of amusement than the mysteries and farces.

People awakened to the new erudition, introduced by the humanists, felt the want of intellectual entertainment. To see before them a living representation of the characters of antiquity—the subjects of their diligent studies—aroused in the savants unbounded enthusiasm. They themselves undertook to play the various parts.¹ The first representation took place at the Hôtel de Reims, in 1552, then at the College of Boncour, before Henry II and his court. According to Brantôme, the king presented Jodelle with five hundred écus and his gracious favor. Shortly after, Jodelle produced another tragedy, *Didon se sacrifiant*.

The impulse to tragedy having been given, there was soon a whole school of dramatic authors following in the footsteps of Jodelle. Jean de la Taille wrote *Saül le Furieux*, and *La Famine ou les Gabaonites* (1571); Antoine de Montchrétien (1575-1621) wrote *Sophonisbe*, *David*, *l'Ecoissaise*, and Robert Garnier (1535-1601), who showed in his tragedies more elevation, harmony, and purity of language than his contemporaries, produced among other pieces, *Les Juives*,² his masterpiece.

¹ Jodelle as Cleopatra; Ronsard, Baïf, La Péruse, etc., taking other parts.

² Funeral Chorus of *Les Juives*:

Comment veut-on que maintenant
Si désolées,
Nous allions la flûte entonnant
Dans ces vallées?

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All tragedies, however, were almost entirely based on an imitation of Seneca, and only written for court and college amusement, until about 1600, when Alexandre Hardy introduced them to the public. Alexandre Hardy (about 1570-1631), was an actor, and the dramatist of a company of players under Valleran Lecomte, in the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Although a mediocre writer, he helped to fix the form of classic tragedy, he created the plot, and strengthened the unity of action. Compelled to work very rapidly to supply the requisite number of plays, he was often obliged to furnish one at a day's notice, and once wrote a five-act tragedy in five days. The popularity of his plays was increased by the variety of sources—Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish literature—from which he took his material. He wrote about seven hundred plays, tragedies, tragi-comedies, pastorals, etc., which appealed to both the court circles and the people. Of these numerous plays, he published only forty, the best of which is *Marianne*.

With Hardy, the modern theater found its impulse, and dominated the stage for thirty years, but the definite formation of tragedy dates from Corneille.

True French comedy also dates from the sixteenth century. Jodelle, Ronsard, Baïf, translated the comedies of antiquity, while Jean de la Taille, Odet de Turnèbe, Godard and many others imitated the Italian comedies. Among the latter writers, the greatest was Larivey,¹ an Italian, Pierre Giunto, who settled in France under the name of Pierre de

Que le luth touché de nos doigts
Et la cithare,
Fassent résonner de leurs voix,
Un ciel barbare?

Que la harpe de qui le son
Toujours lamente,
Assemble avec notre chanson
Sa voix dolente?

How it is to be expected that we, so desolate, should go forth into the vales with sounding flute?—that lute and zither, touched by our hands, should echo in a barbarous clime?—that the sound of the ever-lamenting harp should mingle with the doleful voice of our song?

¹ Larivey (*arrivé*), French translation of Giunto.

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l'Arivey. His comedies are characterized by fine observation, originality, and force; and written in prose, an innovation at that time, they form an epoch in the history of the French theater. *Les Esprits*, his best comedy, furnished the material for several scenes of Molière's *L'Étourdi*.

Comedy altogether dominated by the *Commedia dell'Arte* brought by the Italians from across the Alps, became erudite and artificial, and it remained with the grand Corneille to regulate comedy as well as to create true tragedy.

SATIRE MÉNIPPÉE

Satire has always been cultivated in France where it is in harmony with the racial characteristics. During the Middle Ages, it played a continuous rôle—in fables, farces, moralities, soties, etc. Rabelais used it, and Du Bellay and Ronsard advocated its cultivation, and finally, satire became embodied in some important works of the sixteenth century: *Discours sur les misères de ce temps* of Ronsard, the famous *Satires* of Régnier, the *Tragiques* of d'Aubigné, and the political pamphlet—the *Satire Ménippée*. During the seventeenth century, satire reached its culmination in Boileau's *Art Poétique* and in some of his *Satires*.

The *Satire Ménippée* is the most famous of that species of literature—the pamphlet—which the political chaos of the sixteenth century brought forth. It took its name from the *Satira Menippeia* of the Roman¹ satirist Varro, who imitated Menippos, the pupil of Diogenes. The pamphlet was the work of a circle of friends: Leroy, a chaplain of the Connétable de Bourbon; Passerat, Durand, poets; Gillot, Pithou, Rapin, and Chrestien, lawyers and professors.

These men were no Huguenots, but peaceful Catholics, who feared evil results for their country from the doings of the League,² and the prolongation of the civil wars, which might finally deliver France into Spanish hands.

¹ The Romans have claimed the invention of this genre: *Satira quidem tota nostra est.* (Quintilian.)

² The League was a confederation of the Catholic party, founded by the Duke of Guise in 1576, with the apparent purpose of defending the Catholic religion against the Calvinists, but in reality to overthrow Henry

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The *Satire Ménippée*¹ was a sort of farce divided into two parts: *La Vertu du Catholicon*, and *Les Affaires des États—Généraux*. The Preface introduces two charlatans, who sell the Catholicon, a marvelous drug, which has the effect of permitting one to be a traitor and an assassin in the name of the Holy Church. This was symbolical of the religious zeal alleged by the Leaguers as an excuse to fight against the king—a false zeal, intended to conceal their revolutionary spirit. “Then comes a description (in which, as throughout the work, actual facts are blended inextricably with satirical comment) of the procession of opening. To this succeeds a sketch of tapestries with which the hall of meeting was hung, all of which are, of course, allegorical, and deal with murders of princes, betrayal of native countries to foreigners, etc. Then comes ‘L’Ordre tenu pour les Séances,’ in which the chief personages on the side of the League are enumerated in a long catalogue, every item of which contains some bitter allusion to the private or public conduct of the person named. Seven solemn speeches are then delivered by the Duke de Mayenne as head of the League, by the legate, by the Cardinal de Pellevé, by the Bishop of Lyons, by Rose, the fanatical rector of the University, by the Sieur de Rieux, as representative of the nobility, and, lastly, by a certain Monsieur d’Aubray for the Tiers-État. A burlesque coda concludes the volume, the joints of which are: first, a short verse satire on Pellevé; secondly, a collection of epigrams; and, thirdly, Durant’s *Regret Funèbre à Mademoiselle ma Com-mère sur le Trépas de son Âne*, a delightful satire on the Leaguers, which did not appear in the first edition, but which yields to few things in the book.”²

The clever composition, the striking satire and wit displayed and its great purpose—to show that religion should not be made to serve politics—endeared it to all hearts. It was

III and to place the Guises, chiefs of the League, on the French throne. Henry IV understood that by abjuring Calvinism he would put an end to the League. “Paris is indeed worth a mass,” said Henry in embracing Catholicism and restoring peace to France.

¹ The full title is *De la Vertu du Catholicon d’Espagne et de la Tenue des États de Paris*.

² From Saintsbury’s *French Literature*.

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not a book composed as a whole, but a veritable journal, published successively in detached leaves, and then combined as a collection. A nineteenth-century echo of this great satirical pamphlet, was the *Minerve Française* of the Restoration, a semiperiodical, issued irregularly (1818-20) at a time when some subterfuge was necessary to evade a ruthless censorship.

MÉMOIRES

France is considered the fatherland of the genre of literature, known as *Mémoires*. Chateaubriand attributes the superiority of the French nation to produce the best *Mémoires*, to the inclination of the French people to narrate, to their sociability, and to the vanity of their humor. Joinville and Froissart have written nothing else; under Louis XI and Charles VIII, Commines excelled in that genre. Under Francis I, the Marshal de Fleuranges set down the recital of his campaign with a simple vivacity. Montaigne's *Essais* are classed among the great *Mémoires*. Jean Martin and Guillaume Du Bellay have written their *Mémoires* in a simple, curious style. But, of the greatest importance, are perhaps the *Mémoires* of the sixteenth century, which relate to the immediate religious and political strifes of that period—when France was alive with armed bands, when religious wars racked the country, and men killed each other with bestial rage. During this time, many men yielded to the impulse to write what they had observed, and if their works were badly written they had the great merit of sensible and vigorous simplicity and animated expression, which brought the events clearly before one. Among this group of warrior writers was the old general d'Estrées, who told in a few pages of the forty fortresses he had taken, and "whose great frame," says Brantôme, "one saw mounted on a big charger holding himself erect at the trenches, which he overtowered by half his body, and remaining there, with head uplifted in the midst of bullets, as if he were on a hunt."

Blaise de Lasseran-Massencome, Seigneur de Montluc (1502-77), was a captain of warlike ferocity, who turned his declining days to account and wrote his exploits for the instruction of his children and the young nobility of France. His *Com-*

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mentaires, valuable for the history of his epoch, were written with the fiery "eloquence of the brigand," and he seemed to glory in the bloodshed of the numerous civil wars he lived through. He, however, writes: "I have all my life hated writing, and would pass a whole night with my armor on my back in preference to writing."

François de La Noue, called *Bras de fer* (Iron Arm), (1531-91), was a French captain, representative of the severe Protestant type. King Henry IV said of him, "He is a great warrior, but a still greater man of honor." In his captivity, La Noue wrote his *Discours politiques et militaires*, which Henry IV called the soldier's Bible. It is a precious literary work, full of the knowledge of the times and discloses the writer's honesty and purity of intention.

Guillaume de Tavannes (1509-73), one of those great Catholic lords leagued together to defend their faith, left *Mémoires* valuable to history, but characterized by an audacious use of bad language. His brother, Jean de Tavannes, also a writer, but a Protestant and faithful servant of Henry IV, found himself many times on the same battle-field with his brother in opposite camps.

To these might be added a long list of interesting *Mémoires*, such as the *Historia sui temporis* written in Latin by the Protestant de Thou; the *Memoriae nostrae libri VI*, of Paradin; the *Mémoires* of the Duc de Sully, one of France's greatest ministers, published under the title of *Sages et royales économies d'État*; of Marshal de Villeroi; and the *Mémoires* of Nicolas de Catinat, Marshal of France, whose simplicity, fine moral character, and the great solicitude he showed for the welfare of his soldiers, earned for him the cognomen of *Père la Pensée* (Father Thoughtful). This great soldier, who sold his estates to equip the army of the king, said: "As long as a drop of blood and an inch of land remain to me, I will employ them in the service of the country in which God allowed me to be born."

Two men of great diversity of character, manners, and opinion were among the famous *Mémoire* writers of the sixteenth century. One, Pierre de Bourdailles, Seigneur de Brantôme (1540-1614), better known as the abbot of Brantôme, whose writings are characterized by a frivolity border-

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ing on obscenity. His *Mémoires*, writes a French critic, are a continuous and servile echo of all the rumors of the court and the city which—from Francis I to Henry IV—struck the ear of a curious and talkative courtier. No writer was ever more completely devoid of moral sentiment. He repeats everything without thinking of anything; a true parrot of the court, the more interesting as he is less profound. For he tries to veil nothing, and so the whole century is reflected in the impudent frankness of his work. The mobility of his mind puts him in sympathy with the events which he relates; one sees him moved by Mary Stuart's misfortunes, struck by the austerity of old Montmorency,¹ astonished at the Roman grandeur of L'Hospital, charmed with the heroism of Bayard. Though his style is neither brilliant nor precise, he grows animated in the recital of battles and debauches; he reproduces very well the gossip of the courtiers and the women, and records with ample truth those varied impressions which, by turns, control him, without even inspiring him with respect for virtue or hatred for vice.

Brantôme's *Mémoires* include: *Vies des hommes illustres et grands capitaines français et étrangers*; *Vies des dames illustres*; *Vies des dames galantes* (a collection of obscene anecdotes); *Anecdotes de la cour de France touchant les duels*; *Rodomontades et jurements des Espagnols*; etc. All these captains and illustrious ladies with whom Brantôme had lived on a familiar footing, are depicted by him with a piquant naïveté and give a true and characteristic picture of the times.

The other man was a Gascon gentleman, caustic and boastful, audacious in love and war—Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné² (1550–1630), Calvinistic captain, historian, and littérateur. It is said that at the age of eight years, when passing in the public square of Amboise before a number of gibbets, from which were suspended the heads of some of his coreligionists, he pledged his life to the Protestant cause. His entire writings show a passionate party feeling and a profound sorrow for the condition of his country; they display force and wit,

¹ Wounded to death in a battle, this famous Connétable de France said to his confessor: "Do you think that I have lived for eighty years with honor, not to know how to die in a quarter of an hour?"

² He was the grandfather of Madame de Maintenon.

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an ardent mind, and a bold valor. Whatever there was of ardor, of impetuosity, of giddiness, of originality, says a famous French critic, in that Gascon and Protestant youth that pressed around Henry IV, is found again in d'Aubigné. At the age of ten he made his first expedition in his shirt. Guizot tells us that a kinsman of pacific temperament locked up young d'Aubigné to quell his martial humor. Every evening his garments were taken away and brought back in the morning. He could escape from his prison only through the window. But, "What youth wants, God wants"; the linen of his bed served him as a ladder; then he was free, but without clothing other than his shirt. In this attire he reached, at night, a company of Huguenot cavaliers. They covered his nakedness, the captain took him on his horse, and thus he entered on his campaign. At one time he danced the *gaillarde*¹ before the Grand Inquisitor ready to condemn him to death, escaped through a window, and, fleeing to the domains of Renée de France, hastened to seat himself at the feet of the princess, where, on a silken cushion, he improvised, still out of breath, and soiled with dust, a sermon on contempt of death, after the Bible and Seneca.

He was a very energetic prose writer, and evolved such audacious opinions in his *Histoire universelle depuis 1555 jusqu'en 1601*, that he was obliged to take refuge in Geneva after its publication. Here he was occupied in repairing the fortifications of the city from the material of a church which had been in ruins for forty years. His enemies considered this sufficient cause for his arrest and condemnation to death. It was the fourth time that the death sentence hung over d'Aubigné, but he was so little concerned about it that he married shortly after.

D'Aubigné wrote two spirited pamphlets: *La Confession du sieur de Sancy*, who changed his faith several times, and *Le Divorce satyrique de la reine Marguerite*. He was one of the most vigorous satirists and poets of his times. *Les Aventures du Baron Foeneste* is one of the most ingenuous

¹ A bold dance which originated in Italy and was brought to France, where it became the vogue in the sixteenth century. The composer, Prætorius, called it an "invention of the devil, full of shameful and obscene gestures and of immodest movements."

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satires of customs and manners. The story is in the form of a dialogue between two men. One, the Baron de Foeneste (from the Greek *φαίνεσθαι*, to appear), is a Gascon gentleman, a Papist, ridiculously attired with jacket of many colors and flowing trousers of taffeta. He relates with bragging fatuity and comical vanity to his friend, Enay (from the Greek *εἶναι*, to be), a Huguenot, his adventures at court. Enay is a man of sedate qualities, wise and virtuous, who has the good sense to remain peacefully on his estates. In this book, d'Aubigné intermingles violent attacks with caustic humor against all the follies of his time, particularly against the great failing of the century—that of false appearance.

The great satirical poem of d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, discloses a grewsome picture of the horrors of the religious wars. Pathos, force, audacity, and outbursts of passionate hatred characterize the work. It is a picture in seven books, of the misfortunes of France and the persecution of the Protestants. The first book, entitled *Misères*, is a general picture; the second, *Les Princes*, is a furious satire on the court of Henry III; the third book, *La Chambre Dorée* (The Golden Chamber), is a diatribe against magistracy; the fourth, *Les Feux* (Fire), and the fifth, *Les Fers* (Irons), are the recitals of different death penalties meted out to Protestants; the sixth is *Vengeance*, and the seventh, *Jugement*. *Les Tragiques* is a great lyric poem, but written without art.

In contradistinction as to sex, but equal as to ability, a woman stands among these warrior writers who added fame to the sixteenth century—Marguerite de Valois (1492–1549), called “la Marguerite des Marguerites” (the pearl of pearls). She was the sister of Francis I, the wife of the Duc d'Alençon, and for many years as the wife of Henri d'Albret, the Queen of Navarre. A spirited woman of brilliant education, of high intellect, scrupulous morality, and eager sympathies, she encouraged the arts, protected scholars, and had a marked influence upon the Renaissance movement in France. She wrote with facility in verse and in prose, which merited for her the title of “the tenth Muse.” She is especially famous as the author of the *Heptameron*, a collection of seventy-two stories after the manner and plan of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. They are narrated with much cleverness, but some of them are too

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licentious for modern taste; for taste varies with the epoch we live in.

The sixteenth century is also famed for its humane activity. It is in this century that St. Vincent de Paul established the first home for foundlings. A provision was made by him for the foundlings, by which he secured through a brief, but effective appeal, forty thousand livres for the purpose. The Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, formerly called Daughters of Charity, were first united to care for these poor abandoned children whom Vincent de Paul rescued from starvation or ill-treatment.¹ Vincent de Paul founded the Priesthood of the Mission, called, later on, Lazarists. He also founded a large number of hospitals, and ended his holy career at the age of eighty-five. He was canonized by Clement XII.

¹ In Victor Hugo's *L'Homme qui Rit* (The Man Who Laughs) there is a chapter on the *Comprachicos*—monsters in men's form who kidnaped deserted children, cut their muscles and otherwise mutilated them, and then sold them to the lords whom their deformities would amuse. The existence of the *Comprachicos* is disputed.

CHAPTER XI

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE seventeenth century, commonly called *le Siècle de Louis XIV*, begins with the stormy minority of that king under the regency of Anne of Austria, the queen mother. In this period occurred the civil wars, undertaken by the great lords, to restore their expiring power, the *Cabale des Importants* (Plot of the Importants) and the mad doings of the Fronde.

The Plot of the Importants with the Dukes de Beaufort and de Guise as leaders, whose object it was to frustrate the power of Mazarin, ended with Beaufort's imprisonment at Vincennes. The wars of the Fronde were also directed against Mazarin. They were parliamentary and aristocratic insurrections against the policy of Anne of Austria and Mazarin, and were divided into two periods. The first or Parliamentary Fronde lasted from August, 1648, to March, 1649. The second or Fronde of the Princes (the party of the Condés) lasted from October, 1649, to September, 1653. When Mazarin wished to impose a tax, the burden of which would be borne by the poor alone, the magistrates were filled with pity, and when the edict was presented for registration, they rejected it. A special court of justice was thereupon convened, and Louis XIV, at the age of seven, was conducted to Parliament, where the tax was registered. Mazarin caused some magistrates to be imprisoned, and the people of Paris revolted against the king's troops. On one side was the Regent Anne of Austria, and Mazarin; on the other, the enemies of the court. There was fighting of a morning and dancing at night. For symbols, the *frondeurs* wore straw bouquets on their hats. They satirized the power of Mazarin by songs and couplets;

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but he only said in his Italian French: *S'ils cantent la canzonetta, ils pagaront.*" ("If they sing their little song they will pay.") The most popular of those *Mazarinades*, as the satirical rhymed pamphlets were called, is the one by Scarron:

Un vent de fronde
A soufflé ce matin;
Je crois qu'il gronde
Contre le Mazarin.¹

A price was placed on the head of Mazarin, and he was forced into exile, but soon restored. The name *Fronde*, sarcastically given, was first applied to the malcontents, it is said, by a magistrate of the Parliament, who compared their resistance to that of the street urchins who defied each other with slings (*frondes*) in the moats around Paris, and often turned against the archers sent to arrest them.

This period was but the continuation of the stormy times of the sixteenth century. "One sees," says a French critic, "the same disorder in the customs of the times, the same unintelligent imitation of the antiquity of Italy and Spain; hence in literature the same license of expression, the same pedantry, the same effects, the same Italian plays on words, and the same Spanish magniloquence which are the characteristics of the preceding century. Only during the second half of the seventeenth century, beginning with the actual reign of Louis XIV, did French genius—enlightened by the torch of spiritual philosophy, of religion, of antiquity well understood, and encouraged by the munificence of the great king—begin to display all its qualities, and the French language to acquire that degree of maturity and perfection beyond which, perhaps, it may change, but not improve. Louis XIII was a weak, timid prince, indifferent to letters. Under his reign the Court exercised no influence upon society or upon literature. However, men's minds having become more enlightened, there was a tendency toward gentler and more elegant manners. Societies were formed in Paris for the betterment

¹ A "Fronde" wind blew this morning; I believe it is roaring against Mazarin.

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of social behavior, to purify the relations between men and women, and to make the language more decent, more reserved, more regular.”

The most celebrated of these societies is that which assembled at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, the first and the most illustrious of the literary salons. It had existed since 1610, but the period from 1624–1648 marked the time of its glory and its influence. It was, so to speak, directed successively by three women of distinguished minds and charming grace: the Marchioness of Rambouillet; her daughter, Julie d'Angennes, later Duchess of Montausier; and her younger daughter, Angélique de Rambouillet, who was, later, the first wife of the Marquis de Grignan. The Marquis of Rambouillet, grand-master of the royal wardrobe, had married Catherine de Vivonne, in whom were united loveliness of figure with a scrupulous virtue, a cultured mind, a pure taste, and a great passion for letters.

The entire Hôtel de Rambouillet was reconstructed according to the plans of the Marquise, who also introduced an innovation as to the artistic decoration of the rooms. One of these, the *Chambre bleue* (blue room) so called because the walls, hangings, and furniture were of blue velvet, has become famous as the rendezvous of brilliant men and beautiful women. This room has been the subject of poems by Voiture, Tallemant des Réaux, and Chapelain who called it the *Loge de Zyrphée*.

Madame de Rambouillet assembled at her house a choice society free from the license that prevailed in the morals and the language of the times. The men were called *Précieux* and the women *Précieuses*, and this name was pleasing, since it was bestowed upon women of irreproachable conduct and a taste for spiritual things, who prided themselves on the delicacy and elegance of their sentiments, their manners, and their language. The name of Catherine, the Marquise de Rambouillet, seemed unpoetic, so Malherbe made it into an anagram: Arthénice. The beautiful Arthénice, the “incomparable” as she was also called, although susceptible to the cold, could not endure fire because it burned her skin; so she received her guests in an unheated chamber. The guests ranged themselves in the *ruelle*, the space between the wall

and the bed,¹ on which the marquise sat wrapped in furs. Hence came the expression, *coureur de ruelles*.²

Here were united the beaux-esprits of the times to discuss intellectual questions and to cultivate the belles-lettres. Words were examined from all sides with minute care, and were admitted or rejected by a majority of votes. The grammarian, Vaugelas, was the president of this singular academy and his opinion regarding the fate of words had great weight. The reform begun by Malherbe in the French language, was continued by the Précieuses, and the transformation which was consummated in the literature during the first thirty years of the century is due to them. The poets of the hour read their latest madrigals. Comedies and tragedies were played, the Marquise herself taking part. Brilliant minds exchanged ideas and discussed questions on philosophy, literature, and grammar.

The reign of the Précieuses, which had dominated the literary world for so many years, had been prepared by the rococo style of the idealistic novels originating in Italy and in Spain. In Italy, with Marini's *Les Querelles des désespérés*, and San-nazzaro's *Arcadia*; in Spain, with Gongora's cultism and Montemayor's novel *Diana enamorada*. These were imitated in France by Honoré d'Urfé in his novel *L'Astrée*.

In d'Urfé's novel, the principal characters were shepherds who spun out their love stories. One saw through transparent pseudonyms Henri IV, Marguerite de Valois, his first wife; and Gabrielle d'Estrées, whose sudden death by poison only prevented her from becoming his second wife, and various other personages. There are some interesting passages in the long recitals, but for the most part there are interminable dissertations on the different degrees of love. It is the same style of discussion which formed the theme of conversation among the Précieuses. Of these there were three cen-

¹ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many people of high rank received guests before rising.

² Formerly this expression meant one who frequented assiduously the society of the great ladies. It is equivalent to the term now in use, *coureur de salons*. *Style de ruelle* meant *style précieux*. A *coureur de ruelles* now means one who frequents resorts of low debauchery (usually in the *ruelles*—lanes or alleys).

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ters in the seventeenth century: the Hôtel de Rambouillet, the palace of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and the house of Mademoiselle de Scudéry. There the Précieuses composed little verses and madrigals, and above all, heroic novels. Mademoiselle de Scudéry wrote *Clélie* (histoire romaine) a tiresome novel, in which she depicts under a Roman guise, the Précieuse coterie. With ridiculous sentimentalism and fastidious lucubrations, she describes the map of the *Pays de Tendre* (Country of Love), whose capital is *Tendre sur Inclination* (Love on the River of Inclination). The various degrees of love are described as towns, rivers, and mountains. The great Condé, the Duchess of Longueville, the Archduke Leopold of Austria, the Marquise de Rambouillet, and other celebrities of the day, are easily recognized under thinly disguised characters in the novel. This idealistic style which was in vogue in all the cultivated societies of Europe, was called Marinism (after Marini) in Italy, Gongorism (after Gongora) in Spain, euphuism in England (after Lyly's *Euphues*), and précieux in France. The Précieuses contributed much to establishing that art of conversation which is one of the glories of France.¹ But—as too often happens—the goal in view was overleaped. By dint of purifying the sentiments, of “giving the mind control over matter,” they often sacrificed good sense, and in their super-refinement of the sentiments, in their search for the finest, they ruined the delicacy of wit and sentiment. The language became pretentious and abounded with far-fetched and affected metaphors. The most elevated as well as the most simple things lost their names, and a direct and simple manner of speech became entirely out of fashion. Under pretext of banishing vulgar words and employing only beautiful language, all that is natural and simple was treated as base and ignoble. Innocent expressions were proscribed, and the language was in a fair way to become a ridiculous and unintelligent jargon. When the Précieuses would speak of servants, they referred to them as the “faithful,” or the

¹ For centuries the French have laid stress on the art of conversing and have perfected it to such an extent that they can discuss the most delicate subjects in such a manner as not to shock the sensibilities. This is the triumph of the art of conversation over the coarseness of realities and even of thought.

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“ necessary ”; they went to meet you “ with the wings of impatience ”; the nightcap became the “ innocent accomplice of a lie ”; the eyes were the “ mirrors of the soul,” or the “ paradise of the soul ”; the ears were the “ doors of the understanding ”; gray hairs were “ quittances d’amour ” (acquittances of love); trees were “ rustic ornaments ”; the sun was the “ torch of the day ”; the feet were the “ poor sufferers ”; a glass of water, a “ bath for the interior ”; a broom, the “ instrument of cleanliness ”; the chemise, the “ constant companion of the dead and the living ”; and war, the “ mother of disorder.” Instead of saying sit down, the affected term “ satisfy the longing of this chair to embrace you ” was used. Instead of telling the servant to extinguish the candle, they would say “ take away the superfluity of that light.” Many of these expressions found a permanent place in the French language; such as, “ féliciter ” (to felicitate); “ le masque de la vertu ” (the mask of virtue) for hypocrisy; “ perdre son sérieux (to loose one’s seriousness) for to laugh; and, strange as it may seem, the word “ s’encanailler ” (to keep low company).

This manner of speech was taken up by the clumsy imitators of the *Précieuses* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet who abounded in Paris, and had spread to the provinces, when Molière began an active crusade against them in his immortal satire *Les Précieuses Ridicules*. It was his first effective blow and was continued in *Les Femmes Savantes*. The greatest names of all nobility and of literature were among the *Précieux* and *Précieuses* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, but Molière inspired by the “ demon of comedy,” fearlessly assailed them with that recklessness characteristic of genius. Neither did Molière timidly try his play on the provinces, but produced it boldly in the Petit-Bourbon Theater in 1659 and achieved a glorious victory. The members of the Hôtel de Rambouillet were present at the first performance, and were clever enough not to recognize themselves, and to applaud. Angélique de Rambouillet, who presided, was a partisan of Molière.

Among the illustrious women who shone in the salon of the Marquise de Rambouillet were the Marquise de Sévigné, Duchesse de Longueville, Marquise de Lafayette, Mar-

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quise de Sablé, Mademoiselle Paulet, and others. Madeleine Paulet, on account of her golden hair called the *Lionne rousse*, counted among her *mourants*¹ the dukes of Guise and of Bellegarde as well as marquises and marshals. The great lords who frequented the *Chambre bleue* of Arthénice were the Prince de Condé, the most famous of that illustrious line of princes; the Marquis de Sablé, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, the Marquis de Vigan and the Duc de Montausier, who after "sighing" for fourteen years for Julie, the fair daughter of the house, was finally rewarded for his devotion. Julie was not so much the child of her parents as the child of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. When her father spoke of giving her in marriage, there was a general outcry: the Hôtel without Julie was inconceivable. The Duke presented Julie for a New Year's gift (1641) with a collection of sixty-three madrigals composed by the beaux-esprits of the day. It was called the *Guirlande de Julie* (Julie's garland), and was in the form of a manuscript on vellum in folio, of twenty-nine leaflets. Each one was ornamented with a flower painted by the famous artist Robert, and under each flower was written by the calligraphist Jarry, one of several madrigals. The Duke himself composed sixteen and even the great Corneille contributed verses on the tulip, the orange blossom, and the white everlasting. This valuable garland now in the possession of the Duc d'Uzès, was once the property of England, acquired at a cost of thirty thousand francs.

The distinguished Vincent Voiture (1598-1648), the son of a wine merchant of Amiens, was one of the most brilliant minds of the celebrated society. With Voiture gallantry entered poetry. His *Lettres*, full of elegant gossip and a spirited joyousness, qualities for which he was unsurpassed as a conversationalist, had a prodigious success.

Benserade (1613-1691), the favorite poet of the grandes dames, was also a dramatic author. His chief claim to fame rests in having provoked the celebrated battle of sonnets which lasted about a year and a half. In opposition to Benserade's sonnet on *Job*, Voiture wrote his sonnet to *Urania*, and there

¹ I. e., suitors ready to die for their ladylove. (Expression used by the *Précieuses* for *amoureux*.)

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ensued a literary battle. The court and the city took part with great zest; hence the names Uranistes and Jobelins, indicative of the partisans of the two poets. Many writings in verse and prose also appeared under these names. "The factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, of the white rose of Lancaster and the red rose of York, caused no more blood to flow than this literary civil war of the Uranistes and Jobelins, caused ink to flow." The French Academy and the Sorbonne declined to arbitrate, so the committee of awards of the University of Caen decided in favor of Voiture. Corneille entered into the debate, saying that one of the sonnets was the most ingenious, but he would have wished to have written the other.

Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac (1594-1654), a disciple of Malherbe, effected for prose the reform which his master had brought about in poetry; he gave it nobility, harmony, and order. Balzac's *Lettres*, published in 1624, were a prodigious success in all Europe and gained for him the title of "grand épistolier de France."

Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1585-1660), the oracle of the *Précieuses*, labored for thirty years on a free translation, purely written, of the work of Quintus Curtius. His work *Remarques sur la Langue Française*, is considered excellent.

Racan (1589-1670), who in spite of his shyness and awkward absence of mind, fell in love many times, was inspired to write a pastoral of three thousand verses.

The poet Chapelain (1595-1674), after twenty years of work, published the first twelve cantos of his *La Pucelle* (The Maid of Orleans). These the Duchess of Longueville pronounced "very fine but very tedious," and so Chapelain did not dare to have the rest of his epic printed; it remained in manuscript in the files of the Bibliothèque Nationale.¹

Gombauld was the author of *Endymion*. Owing to his tall figure and curt speech, he was surnamed *le beau ténébreux*.²

Oliver Patru, academician and lawyer, was called the "French Quintilian." He excelled by virtue of a correct-

¹ Founded in the fourteenth century at the palace of the kings, it was the first library accessible to the public, one hundred years before Nicholas founded the library of the Vatican.

² A name assumed by Amadis de Gaule. The expression has passed into the language and applies to a taciturn and melancholy lover.

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ness, a refinement, a good taste, and an elegance unknown at that time to the bar. He was the arbiter of the art of speaking well, and his inaugural discourse before the Academy was so esteemed that a similar one was exacted from that time on, of all the members newly admitted. His works were published several times during his lifetime.

Godeau, prelate littérateur, was called the "dwarf" of Julie, because of his small stature and his assiduities to the fair Julie. These men with Cospian, the eloquent preacher, and his pupils, Richelieu and Bossuet, who made his début as preacher in the famous *Chambre bleue*, were all frequenters of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. All these writers constituting the salon of the Hôtel de Rambouillet and the numerous other salons¹ which sprang up in emulation of the Rambouillet, were artists in the matter of language. They were solely occupied in polishing the verbal instrument; they wrote only to make fine sentences. But if they produced nothing powerful and profound in this reform, they rendered great services by purifying and disciplining the language and fixing the rules of syntax. They gave the language a number of words which have endured; they held up to honor all beautiful sentiments expressed in books or in the intercourse of life, and contributed toward elevating the morals and refining the manners. Therefore the famous reunions of the *Chambre bleue* of the Marquise de Rambouillet are considered one of the epochs in the history of French literature.²

In direct contrast to, but actuated by the same impulses which produced the sentimentalism of the *Précieuses* were the burlesque writers. Both were extreme forms resulting from Italian and Spanish influences brought to bear upon French literature. Sarazin, the "Hamilcar" of the *Précieuses*, is said to have written the first French burlesque verses, but he and his many imitators were surpassed by Scarron who was

¹ The salons of Mesdames de Choisy, de Fiesque, de Sully, de Rohan-Chabot, and Mademoiselle de Scudéry, whose Saturdays became very celebrated. Even journals were written for these assemblies in the *ruelles*, as the *Gazette de Soret* written for the *ruelles* of Madame de Longueville.

² Not an unmixed blessing, however, for in bowing to the dictum of the *beau monde* the writer, now and then, had to sacrifice depth and loftiness of thought to perfection of style.

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the first to undertake a large burlesque work. Paul Scarron (1610-1660), whom a cruel practical joke confined for the rest of his life to an invalid's chair, brought burlesque into great vogue for ten years. The loss of his health was followed by that of his fortune; nevertheless, he offered shelter to Françoise d'Aubigné (later Madame de Maintenon, second wife of Louis XIV), who was early orphaned and without sustenance. He offered to pay her dot, if she wished to become a nun, or to marry her, if she preferred that. She was then sixteen, and became a widow at twenty-five. On his death-bed, he addressed these words to his wife: "I leave you without worldly possessions, virtue does not bestow any; however, always be virtuous." It was then that Madame Scarron became governess for the children of Madame de Montespan, the mistress of Louis XIV, and later when de Montespan fell into disfavor, the wife of Louis XIV without the title of queen. Of the peculiar union of Scarron and Françoise d'Aubigné Jules Lemaître writes: "An abbot disguised as an Indian during the carnival was forced to take a nocturnal bath, became a cripple, and was confined by paralysis to his chair for twenty-two years. During this time he never slept an entire night, nor did he ever stop groaning in his pain except to burst into laughter. This man was the founder of burlesque poetry and had the reputation of being the gayest of men. In his day his popularity was more real than that of Corneille or Victor Hugo, his fame more prodigious. But this is insignificant. At the same time there was a little girl who, born in prison and raised in Martinique, returned to France, watched over the turkeys of a wicked and avaricious relative, and experienced poverty and hunger—and who became the wife of the greatest king in the world. Surely these two destinies taken individually would be very strange! But what of their being united? There is something more extraordinary than the personality of Scarron and the fortunes of Françoise d'Aubigné, and that is the marriage of the cripple and the "belle Indienne," future mistress of France. This produced in their lives the most violent antithesis, something as hyperbolically contrasted as one of Victor Hugo's dramatic conceptions."

Scarron laid the foundation of the burlesque school with his

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epic, *Typhon, ou la Gigantomachie*, in which Typhon rolls tenpins with his friends, and when he is hit with a ball, throws it into Olympus, whereupon war ensues between the gods and the Titans, in which the latter are defeated. Scarron was the creator of French travesty. His *Virgile Travesti* is a travesty of Vergil's "Æneid." His most famous work is the *Roman Comique*, in which he describes the lives and adventures of a wandering theatrical troupe in a refreshingly natural and interesting manner. Of this, similarities can be found in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Gautier's novel, *Le Capitaine Fracasse*. Molière, who was a zealous reader of Scarron, borrowed several of his scenes for various plays of his own; Sedaine took from him the idea of *La Gageure Imprévue* (The Unlooked for Wager). Scarron's *La Mazarinade*, a bitter satire against Cardinal Mazarin, cost him his pension as *Malade de la Reine*; ¹ but his style of writing was very much in vogue, and his comedies, the best of which is *Jodelet, ou le Maître Valet*, yielded him an income. Scarron is known to posterity as the creator of the burlesque genre. He himself composed a burlesque testament, and a touching epitaph which has remained famous:

Celui qui cy maintenant dort
Fit plus de pitié que d'envie;
Et souffrit mille fois la mort
Avant que de perdre la vie.

Passant, ne fais ici de bruit,
Garde bien que tu ne l'éveilles:
Car voici la première nuit
Que le pauvre Scarron sommeille.²

¹ Madame de Hautefort obtained for Scarron an audience with the Queen, Anne of Austria, who granted him a pension of five hundred *écus*, for which he jestingly took the title of "Scarron, par la grâce de Dieu, malade indigne de la Reine" (Scarron, by the grace of God, unworthy patient of the Queen). Queen Christine of Sweden said to him: "The Queen of France has created you her *malade*, I make you my Roland."

² He who now sleeps here inspired pity rather than envy, and suffered death a thousand times before he lost his life. Passer-by, be very careful not to wake him, for this is the first night that poor Scarron slumbers.

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Of all the burlesque poets, Scarron alone has survived, and this genre in which he excelled disappeared with him. Charles Coupeau d'Assouci, a burlesque poet coming after Scarron, and who gave himself the title of "Emperor of Burlesque, first of the name," is only remembered by Boileau's verses:

Le plus mauvais plaisant eut des approbateurs,
Et jusqu' à d'Assouci, tout trouva des lecteurs.¹

Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655) was a forerunner of the Encyclopedists of the eighteenth century. His works bizarre, but interesting, had the characteristics of the burlesque, the précieux and the libertin.² His two best works are the satirical and fantastic descriptions of voyages: "*Histoire comique des États et Empire de la Lune*, and *Histoire comique des États et Empire du Soleil*, in which he describes his trips to the moon³ and sun, satirises society, criticises current opinions and puts forth scientific questions. Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*, Voltaire in *Micromégas*, and Fontenelle in *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* have imitated de Bergerac. Jules Verne described a trip to the moon two hundred years after. From Bergerac's *Pédant joué*, into which he introduced a peasant speaking his dialect, Molière took two scenes for his *Fourberies de Scapin*. The character *Sejanus* in Bergerac's tragedy, *la Mort d'Agrippine*, voices the

¹ The worst buffoon had approvers and even d'Assouci found readers.

² *Libertin* in the sixteenth century in France was one who professed liberty, in matters religious; and the libertins were a class of people who opposed the theocratic system of Calvin in Geneva and his regulation of their private life. In the seventeenth century libertin also expressed a tendency of the mind and not of manners. The greatest libertins of that century were the poet Théophile de Viau, the writers Saint-Évremond, Chapelle, and Fontenelle, who formed a transition between the great skeptics of the sixteenth century, Montaigne, etc., and those free-thinkers, the philosophers of the eighteenth century.

³ Bergerac is supposed to have found inspiration for his *Voyage à la lune* in Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moon*, translated from the English and published in Paris in 1648. However, the original manuscript of Bergerac's *Voyage à la lune* recently discovered in the Royal Library at Munich, shows the dates 1641-1643 (the manuscript in the National Library at Paris gives the date 1649-1650).

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sentiments of the *libertins* of the day. Cyrano de Bergerac has lately made his bow before the public again as the hero of Rostand's drama.

Antoine Furetière (1619–1688) in his *Roman Bourgeois*, attacked the sentimental writings then in vogue, and showed the courage of his convictions by ridiculing the sentimentalities and affectations of society, and by portraying life among the middle classes—a thing unheard of; in fact, it was considered an audacity to write a story in which princes and princesses, shepherds and shepherdesses did not play the leading parts. Furetière also compiled a dictionary of some importance; this the French Academy considered an infringement for which it excluded Furetière from its number.

Marc Antoine Gérard, Sieur de Saint-Amant (1594–1661) was the most celebrated and curious of the bacchanalian poets of France in the seventeenth century. In his poems *Albion*, and *Rome ridicule*, he is burlesque. In *Les Goinfres* (The Gluttons), *Le Melon*, etc., he is a “veritable genius, the poetic drinker, the chief and Anacreon of gluttons and haunters of cabarets, who swear only by the cup.” By turns fantastic and realistic Saint-Amant was famous for his rustic and home-life descriptions.

Bernade de La Monnoye was gifted with satirical humor together with a taste for the beautiful and the curious in literature. When the Abbé de La Rivière, Bishop of Langres died, he left one hundred écus to the poet who would write his epitaph. La Monnoye undertook it:

Ci-git un très grand personnage,
Qui fut d'un illustre lignage,
Qui posséda mille vertus,
Qui ne trompa jamais et qui fut toujours sage, . . .
Je n'en dirai pas davantage:
C'est trop mentir pour cent écus.¹

¹ Here lies a very great personage,
Who was of illustrious lineage,
Who possessed a thousand virtues,
Who never deceived and always was wise, . . .
I will say no more;
For one hundred crowns these are too many lies.

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Valentin Conrart, a literary man and a frequenter of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and of the "Saturdays" of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, established a literary salon of his own, comprising about eight men of letters who met once a week at his house. They talked literature, they discussed their own works and projects, and enlightened one another with their counsels. This is the origin of the famous Académie Française; and these modest littérateurs—Conrart, Godeau, Gombault, Habert, Malleville, Chapelain, Desmarets, Serizay—were the first members of that remarkable institution. Richelieu informed of these reunions, offered to organize this society as a public body under the protection of the king (1635) in emulation of the Crusca in Florence. Richelieu's proposition was accepted, and the French Academy was formally constituted in 1637 by letters patent of King Louis XIII. The name Academy comes from *Academe*, the land belonging to Academos, a mythical Greek hero of the Trojan War. This land near Athens, planted with trees and surrounded by walls, was used as a gymnasium where Plato taught philosophy to his disciples. Up to 1635 the number of members of the French Academy had not yet reached thirty, but in 1637 the number was increased to forty, which was never exceeded.

Under the pretext of honoring the society, of elevating the character of the man of letters, and giving him more importance in the state, there were admitted some personages more eminent by their birth or their functions than by any literary distinction. Louis XIV having been declared the protector of the Academy, the title of Academician had its place in the hierarchy of the court, and was coveted by the greatest lords of France and the highest dignitaries of state and church. Although to-day the tendency is toward the selection of members on the basis of literary qualifications, originally this was not the case. As late as the end of the eighteenth century, Voltaire wrote: "The French Academy contains prelates, noblemen, lawyers, professors, and even some writers."

The Academy was to occupy itself solely with the French language—to purify it and to fix it by the publication of a dictionary, a grammar, and poetics. At Richelieu's request the Academy was charged with compiling and editing a dic-

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tionary "which would bring the French language to its highest perfection in designating a means of reaching the highest degree of eloquence." Vaugelas was put in charge of directing the enterprise. The dictionary then became the principal occupation of the Academy, but the first edition¹ did not appear until 1694. The slowness with which it progressed made it the object of much raillery. An epigram on it by Boisrobert is famous:

Depuis six mois sur l'F on travaille,
Et le destin m'aurait fort obligé
S'il m'avait dit: tu vivras jusqu' au G.²

In 1663, Colbert, minister of Louis XIV, appointed a committee of four (from the forty members) called La Petite Académie, whose special work it was to conduct the composition and editing of the inscriptions on public monuments. Later this name was changed to Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. A third branch or class, the Académie des Sciences, was added to the original Academy by Colbert in 1666.

For a long time the Academy had no fixed abode, but met at the different private houses, until Louis XIV assigned it a hall in the Louvre, which it held until 1793 (Year II of the Republican Calendar), when it was dissolved by the Convention. In 1795, the *Directoire* reëstablished the Academy (three branches) under the name of Institut National, to which Napoleon I added the fourth class or branch, the Académie des Beaux-Arts. The fifth branch, the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques was added in 1832 at Guizot's suggestion. Each of these five branches is composed of forty regular members (except the Académie des sciences, which has sixty-eight), and a great number of associates and correspondents. Every regular member receives 1500 francs, and the secretary of each branch, 6000 francs annually. Each branch meets independently of the others, except once a year

¹ The last (seventh) appeared in 1877.

² For six months they have been working on F,
Fate would have been kind to me
Had it said: "You will live till G."

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(October 25th), when a great general assemblage of all the members takes place in the Palais de l'Institut.

The first branch, the Académie Française and its forty immortels,¹ exerts a powerful influence on the progress of literature, owing to the numerous annual prizes it bestows upon the worthy works of French literature; besides which it has the disposal of several prizes to reward noble deeds. "The Academy has impressed on the minds of the nation the idea that the glory of literature is an integral and necessary part of the greatness of a people." The Academy's original statutes are almost unaltered, and at the present time it works daily on its dictionary and grammar. It also criticises, approves, or disapproves, and judges the works it undertakes to crown.

Since 1806, the general name of the five branches has been Institut de France, with the various qualifying adjectives—royal, imperial, or national—added according to the form of governments. And this Institut de France occupies the first place among all the Institutes in the world.

¹ The term *immortel* is used in a Society (and especially the Académie Française) in which deceased members are immediately replaced.

CHAPTER XII

CORNEILLE

LYRIC poetry was expiring and the tendency of poetry became by turns précieux, burlesque, and fantastic. The novel, too, was subject to the fashion of the hour—exotic, descriptive, historical—but, interminable and mediocre, it could not survive its day, except the realistic novel of Sorel and the *Roman comique* of Scarron.

The theater on the contrary improved, and soon put forth masterpieces. When Hardy was still the great and almost sole purveyor of pieces for the stage, the simultaneous decorations¹ of the old mysteries were still in use, the scenes being reduced in size and placed in close juxtaposition according to the space allowed; and the plays were confused and uneven. In his *Mort d'Alexandre*, the first two acts were taken up in the expression of portentous omens and sinister forebodings; in the third, Alexander was poisoned; and during the entire two last acts he died.

From about 1628, a number of poets made their début in tragedy: Théophile de Viau in *Pyrame et Thisbé*,² Racan, Rotrou, François l'Hermite, known as Tristan, whose *Mariamne* became famous, du Ryer, Desmarets, La Calprenède, etc. Tragedy found its form with the establishment of the "three unities," which were employed for the first time in Jean Mairet's tragedy *Sophonisbe* (1629). The three unities: the unity of action, of time, and of place were considered the

¹ The grouping side by side on the stage of all the places where the action is to occur.

² Le voilà, ce poignard, qui du sang de son maître
S'est souillé lâchement: il en rougit, le traître.

(Here is the dagger which, with its master's blood
Has dastardly stained itself: it blushes, the wretch.)

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constituent and necessary elements of tragedy, as interpreted by the Italians from Aristotle's *Poetica* (Chapter VII), and which Mairet imitated. The critics of different countries interpreted these rules more or less correctly, and later it was established that while Aristotle insisted on unity of action as indispensable to the beauty of the drama, he only advocated strongly the observance of the unity of time (twenty-four hours), and did not mention unity of place. When Corneille's *Cid* appeared, the question was agitated and the original interpretation of the rules was made authoritative. Chapelain and d'Aubignac helped to impose them and later Boileau reduced them to an exact formula:

Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli
Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli.¹

The insistence of the "three unities" eliminated the pastoral and the tragi-comedy, and with the *Cid*, Corneille became the true creator of tragedy. The *Cid* marks the definite constitution of tragedy; the adherence to the three unities,² a close study of the soul and the sustaining of the dramatic interest.

Corneille's tragedies reflect history and politics, and show an original conception of the sovereign will, together with loftiness of thought and heroism of sentiment; whence has come the phrase *école de grandeur d'âme*. (school of magnanimity). Racine in his eulogy of Corneille, delivered before the Academy said: "You well know in what state you found the drama when he began to work. What disorder! What irregularity! All the rules of art, even those of fitness and decorum were violated. In this infancy, or more properly speaking, in this chaos of the dramatic poem among us,

¹ Let one single deed accomplished in one place, in one day,
Keep the stage filled until the end.

² Not a strict adherence, however; Corneille interpreted unity of time to mean the minimum of duration in time; unity of place, the minimum of variation in place, and unity of action, the maximum of verisimilitude. (G. Lanson.)

The *Preface of Cromwell* (considered the manifesto of the Romantic school) of Victor Hugo overthrew the rule of the "three unities," insisting alone upon the unity of action as indispensable to a masterpiece.

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Corneille after having for some time sought the right path and fought against the bad taste of his century, finally, inspired by an extraordinary genius, and aided by the knowledge of the ancients, caused rationality to appear on the stage, accompanied by all the splendor, all the embellishments of which our language is capable; he happily adjusted the real with the ideal and left well behind him all his rivals."

Before Molière, comedy in France was but lightly esteemed, and the taste of the public turned to tragedy. Comedies were contrived by the tragic poets between tragedies, by way of recreation; for tragedies they reserved the best of their talent. Thus we have Cyrano de Bergerac's *Pédant Joué*, a bizarre buffoonery from which Molière borrowed the *scène de la galère*, and another scene in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. (The Impostures of Scapin); Scudéry's *Trompeur Puni* (The punished Deceiver), the *Comédie des Comédies*, etc.; Tristan l'Hermite's *Folie du Sage* (The Wise Man's Folly); Rotrou's *La Bague de l'Oubli* (The Ring of Oblivion), *Diane* (Diana), etc.; and, finally, Corneille's youthful comedies, so free and brilliant in versification, *Le Menteur*¹ (The Fibber), and *La Suite du Menteur*. *Le Menteur* is a character picture, but not yet a character comedy. Corneille, for the first time, put a character into comedy, but he did not know how to build a comedy on this character. However, this was already a considerable progress over what had preceded, and the road to great comedy was open. Corneille was thus the creator of good comedy in France as he had been of true tragedy. Before him nothing piquant, witty, or particularly amusing had appeared since "l'Avocat Patelin." M. E. Mennechet says: "In order to meet with some traces of French gayety, it is necessary to turn one's steps to the Pont-Neuf, where opposite the statue of Henry IV, the charlatan Mondor and his associate Tabarin made the crowd merry by burlesque and buffoonery, while selling a balsam which they proclaimed a universal remedy. Many great lords and noble ladies stopped their carriages to listen to their witticisms. Among the actors in the open were three: Gros-Guillaume, Gauthier-Garguille,

¹ From the Spanish comedy *La verdad sospechosa* (The Suspicious Truth), by Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón.

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and Turlupin, who drew such crowds that the comedians of the king, who were playing at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, became jealous of their success and complained to Richelieu. The result of this was that the Cardinal called the three mountebanks to play before him in a corner of his palace, and they amused him to such an extent that he advised the royal players to take the three jugglers into partnership. A hint from the Cardinal meant a command, and soon Gros-Guillaume, Gauthier-Garguille and Turlupin were installed in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, to act their farces between the tragedies of the legitimate players. Soon the rival Théâtre du Marais followed this example and played farces which shared the public favor with the tragedies of Rotrou and Corneille, and opened the field for the comic poet.

Pierre Corneille, born at Rouen in 1606, of a family of state officials, had been destined for the bar from his childhood. He was advocate general at the "Marble Table of Rouen."¹ His literary career began with the comedy *Mélite* in 1629. Tradition has it that Corneille introduced into this comedy an adventure of his own life: Corneille was introduced by a friend to a young girl whom this friend loved dearly. Corneille supplanted the friend in the young girl's affections just as, in *Mélite*, Tirsis supplants Érase with Mélite. His love Corneille has immortalized in the following verses:

J'ai brûlé fort longtemps d'une amour assez grande,
Et que jusqu'au tombeau je dois bien estimer,
Puisque ce fut par là que j'appris à rimer.
Mon bonheur commença quand mon âme fut prise:
Je gagnai de la gloire en perdant ma franchise.²

Other comedies soon followed: *Clitandre*, *la Veuve* (The Widow), *la Galerie du Palais*, *la Suivante* (The Waiting

¹ The *Table de Marbre* was a tribunal of appeal from the decisions of the magistrates (maîtres des eaux et forêts), who had authority over the whole extent of their jurisdiction (*maîtrises*).

² For a long time I was consumed by a great love,
Which, even to the grave, I ought well to prize,
Since it was through it that I learnt to rhyme:
My happiness began when my heart was captured:
Losing my freedom, I gained glory.

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Maid), *la Place royale*. These comedies were witty and amusing without being coarse. About 1633 Corneille was presented to Richelieu and became one of his "five authors." Richelieu himself was ambitious to shine as an author and wrote some plays by a peculiar method of collaboration. He would choose a subject, indicate its division into acts and intrust the versification of each act to one of the five poets: Boissier, l'Estoile, Colletet, Rotrou, and Pierre Corneille. He reserved for himself the task of binding together all these parts written separately, and interjected verses of his own making. After the first attempt, *La Comédie des Tuileries*, naturally a weak production, Corneille withdrew from this impossible union, much to Richelieu's chagrin. In this manner the tragedy of *Mirame* was composed. Richelieu displayed a fatherly tenderness for this drama, the representation of which cost him a sum equivalent to 200,000 or 300,000 écus, and for which he had a theater built in his palace, now the Palais Royal.¹ "The applause bestowed upon this tragedy overjoyed the Cardinal. From time to time he arose and left his box to show himself to the spectators; again, he would order silence, in order to have the most beautiful passages admired."

Corneille's tragedy *Medée*, appeared in 1635, and the *Illusion comique* in 1636, and in the same year the *Cid* had its first performance in Paris, and was received with unbounded enthusiasm. "It is difficult to imagine," says Pellisson, "with what approbation this piece was received by the court and the public. People did not grow tired of it; nothing else was heard in society; everyone knew a part by heart; the children were taught it, and in some parts of France, 'beautiful as the Cid' became a saying." The court caught the spirit and wished to see the tragedy which had created such a sensation. The comedians were commanded to play it three times at the palace of the Louvre, and twice at the Cardinal's palace. Even criticism was silent for a moment; carried away by the popular current, stunned by the success of the play, the rivals of Corneille seemed to join the multitude of

¹ This Palais Cardinal, built by Richelieu, was presented by him to the King, and served for a long time as a residence for the princes of Orléans. The famous glass gallery, called the "Galerie d'Orléans," under the old régime a rendezvous for gamblers and libertines, was opened in 1829.

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his admirers. But soon they got their breath again, and their first sign of life was an act of resistance to the torrent which threatened to carry them away. With the exception of Rotrou, who was capable of understanding and enjoying Corneille, the uprising of the playwrights was unanimous. The malcontents and the envious ones had found in Richelieu an ardent and powerful auxiliary. The struggle became ardent and bitter. Much was written in praise or blame.

Balzac wrote to Scudéry, who had sent him his observations on the *Cid*: "Consider, Sir, that all France makes common cause with Corneille, and that there is, perhaps, not one of the judges who—in spite of the rumor that you have conspired together—has not praised the work which you desire him to condemn. So, even if your arguments were invincible, and your adversary were to acquiesce, he would still have good reasons to console himself upon the loss of the suit, and to tell you that it is something more to have satisfied an entire kingdom than to have written a conventional play. This being so, I do not doubt that the gentlemen of the Academy will find themselves hindered in a favorable judgment of your suit; on the one hand, your reasoning will not shake them, and, on the other, the public approval will restrain them. You are victorious in the Cabinet; Corneille has won in the theater. If the *Cid* is guilty, it is of a crime that has been rewarded; if he is punished, it will be only after a triumph. If Plato must banish him (the *Cid*) from his republic, he must crown him with flowers while banishing him, and treat him no worse than he once treated Homer."

A polemic, still celebrated, appeared under the name of the "Quarrel of the *Cid*," and nothing was heard on the streets, it is said, except the cries of the sellers of pamphlets for, or against the *Cid*. The public remained faithful to the play, so the Cardinal craftily resolved to defer his judgment to the Academy, thus exacting from it an act of homage to him, under cover of deference to the predominant opinion. The Academy edited its *Sentiments* in December, 1637, but they did not satisfy the Cardinal. Corneille showed great displeasure, and said: "The Academy proceeds against me with so much violence, and employs such a sovereign authority to close my mouth, that my sole satisfaction rests in thinking

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that the famous work on which so many brilliant minds have labored for six months, may, indeed, be deemed the sentiment of the French Academy. But perhaps this will not be the sentiment of the rest of Paris. I have created the *Cid* for my own recreation and that of people of taste, who delight in the play."

Corneille did not further defend himself; but the public, less docile, persisted in its opinion. It was as Boileau said, later on :

En vain contre le Cid un ministre se ligue.
Tout Paris pour Chimène a les yeux de Rodrigue.
L'Académie en corps a beau le censurer,
Le public, revolté, s'obstine à l'admirer.¹

The struggle was terminated, and the Cardinal's anger ceased; and when *Horace* appeared in 1639, the dedicatory epistle was addressed to the Cardinal. In the same year, *Cinna* placed the reputation of the great poet at its height.

Corneille returned to the obscurity of private life which agreed with the simplicity of his manners. It is said the Cardinal helped him to get married. Corneille lived at Rouen, in a house adjoining that of his younger brother, Thomas,² already well known through some comedies which had been successful. The two brothers married two sisters :

Les deux maisons ne faisaient qu'une;
Les clefs, la bourse était commune;
Les femmes n'étaient jamais deux;
Tous les vœux étaient unanimes:
Les enfants confondaient leurs jeux;
Les pères se prêtaient leurs rimes;
Le même vin coulait pour eux.³

¹ In vain a minister leagues himself against the *Cid*; all Paris sees Chimène through Rodrigue's eyes. The Academy in a body has censured it in vain; the public, indignant, persists in admiring it.

² When Corneille was at a loss for a rhyme to complete a verse, he would open a small slide leading to his brother's room, exclaiming, for instance: "*Sans souci*, a rhyme."

³ The two houses made but one; the keys, the purse were in common; the women were of one accord; all wishes were unanimous; the children mingled in their sports, the fathers lent each other their rhymes, the same wine ran for them.

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In *Polyeucte* (1643), Corneille's style is loftier and purer, his thoughts more exact. This play marked a second revolution in endeavoring to overturn paganism, which was the prevailing idea of the theater. Corneille had dedicated this piece to the regent Anne of Austria. Richelieu was no longer present to impose his judgment, and Corneille wrote:

Qu'on parle bien ou mal du fameux Cardinal,
Ma prose ni mes vers n'en diront jamais rien;
Il m'a fait trop de bien pour en dire du mal,
Il m'a fait trop de mal pour en dire du bien!¹

About the same time, Corneille's comedy *Le Menteur* appeared upon the stage.

There were three periods in the career of Corneille. The first comprised: *Clitandre*, *La Galerie du Palais*, *La Veuve*, *La Place Royale*, *L'Illusion*; the second, his best period: *Le Cid*, *Horace*, *Cinna*, *Polyeucte*, *La Mort de Pompée*, *Nicomède*, *Rodogune*; the third: *Sophonisbe*, *Sertorius*, *Othon*, *Œdipe*, *Agésilas*, *Pulchérie*, *Attila*, *Suréna*. The last plays were not worthy of his genius.

Corneille had announced that he had given up the theater; and he translated the "Imitation of Christ," in verses. "It is better," he had written in his preface to *Pertharite*, "that I resign of my own volition, than that I be dismissed entirely; it is right, that after twenty years of work I begin to notice that I am growing too old to be still fashionable." After six years of retirement he again appeared with *Œdipe*. Fouquet had recalled the genius of Corneille to the theater, and the poet wrote:

Je sens le même feu, je sens la même audace
Qui fit plaindre "le Cid," qui fit combattre "Horace;"
Et je me trouve encore la main qui crayonna
L'âme du grand Pompée et l'esprit de Cinna.²

¹ Let them speak well or ill of the famous Cardinal: neither in prose nor verse will I ever speak of him. He has done me too much good for me to speak evil of him; he has done me too much evil for me to speak good of him.

² I feel the same fire, I feel the same boldness which made the Cid to be pitied, which made Horace fight; and I still find myself the hand which drew the soul of the great Pompey and the mind of Cinna.

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“ Pierre Corneille,” says Faguet, “ is the first man of great genius who appeared in France, and he remains one of the four or five great tragic poets of all time. He spent some ten years writing romantic, or even buffoon comedies; yet those pieces are still read with pleasure. Later on, he formed a conception of human greatness which became his conception of tragic greatness.”

Corneille, in his energetic, sometimes sublime verses, depicted men as they should be. “ He moves us as before a masterpiece, he warms us with the rumor of a fine action, and he intoxicates us with the sole idea of a virtue removed from us forever by the space of three thousand years,” said La Bruyère. Every other thought, every other preoccupation is strange to the poet; his characters breathe heroic passions which they pursue without turning aside or allowing themselves to be fettered by a mortality still imperfectly fixed, and often opposed by the interests and engagements of factions; and thus he remains supremely a man of his time and of his country, while at the same time depicting Greeks, Romans, Spaniards. He does not preach virtue, but the heroism of his characters pervades the mind of the reader—it appeals to our better nature, our thoughts are purified and elevated—at such heights poetry and morals blend. La Bruyère says: “ When a book elevates the mind, do not seek another rule for passing judgment on the work; it is well made, and made by a master hand.” The poet used to say smilingly, when reproached for the slowness and sterility of his conversation: “ I am none the less Pierre Corneille.” The world has passed the same judgment on his works; in spite of the failures of his last years, he has remained the “ great Corneille.”

“ The style of Corneille,” says Demogeot, “ is the merit by which he excels. The touch of the poet is crude, severe and rigorous, with but little adornment and color. It is warm rather than brilliant; he is fond of turning to the abstract, and imagination yields to thought and reason. On the whole, Corneille, a pure genius, incomplete in his grandeur and his faults, creates for me the effect of those great trees, bare, rugged, sad, and monotonous of trunk, covered with branches and dark verdure only at the summit. Such trees are vigorous, powerful, gigantic, with little foliage; abundant sap

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rises in them. But do not expect shelter, nor shade, nor flowers."

Brunetière writes of the tragedy of Corneille: "It is beautiful, it is wonderful, it is sublime, it is not human, nor living, nor true." But writes Lanson: "M. Brunetière is severe. Corneille's heroes are exceptional creatures; the deranged or passive heroes of the contemporaneous novel or drama, are they of a more normal and proportional nature? And is it not just as legitimate to select in the general humanity some exceptional beings, as to depict conditions which are not common except in extreme and particular cases of humanity? And adds Lanson: "How the tragedy of Corneille takes color and life! When one reads it the imagination is filled with the political history of the times. It appears as a clear concentration of moral traits, dispersed in the *Mémoires* of de Retz and of Saint-Simon, in the letters and the papers of the ministers and ambassadors! It is to the France of Louis XIII what *Le Rouge et le Noir*¹ or the novels of Balzac are to the France of Charles X or Louis Philippe. . . . One has never entertained doubt as to the influence Corneille could exercise; his tragedy is a school for the greatness of the soul. It incites aspiration to great efforts, to noble passions, to heroic sacrifices. Never has public opinion varied in this respect."

Corneille's conception of tragedy is the exaltation of the sovereign will above the fatality of the passions, and it is from this standpoint—the sovereignty of the will—that Corneille regards the human soul. His heroes are masters of themselves:

Qu'importe de mon cœur, si je sais mon devoir?²

Aristie in *Sertorius*.

Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers:

Je le suis, je veux l'être. O siècles, ô mémoire,

Conservez à jamais ma dernière victoire!³

Auguste in *Cinna*.

¹ *Red and Black*, by Henri Beyle, known by the nom de plume of Stendhal.

² What matters about my heart, if I know my duty?

³ I am master of myself as I am of the universe:

I am, it is my will that I be. Oh, ages, oh, memory,

Retain forever my last victory!

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Sur mes passions ma raison souveraine.¹

Pauline in *Polyeucte*.

Je suis fort peu de chose,

Mais enfin de mon cœur moi-même je dispose.²

Dircé in *Œdipe*.

Faites votre devoir et laissez faire aux dieux.³

Old Horace in *Horace*.

Lanson says the Cornelian sublimity lies therein that the whole soul, when the crucial moment comes, reaches with a single impulse toward the good. Examine, he says, the places where one feels the indefinable impression to which the word "sublime" has been applied:

Je suis jeune il est vrai; mais aux âmes bien nées,

La vertu n'attend pas le nombre des années.⁴

Rodrigue in the *Cid*.

Que vouliez-vous qu'il fit contre trois?—Qu'il mourût!⁵

Horace.

Où le conduisez-vous?—

—A la mort.

—A la gloire.⁶

Polyeucte.

Argument of *Le Cid*: Chimène, the daughter of Count Gormas, loves Don Rodrigue, son of Don Diego. The king names Don Diego tutor to his son, in consequence of which Don Gormas, who feels himself entitled to the post, quarrels with Don Diego and strikes him. As the latter is too old to revenge himself, his son, Don Rodrigue, challenges Count

¹ My sovereign reason over my passions.

² I am but very little,

But after all, I myself dispose of my heart.

³ Do your duty and leave the rest to the gods.

⁴ I am young, 'tis true; but with generous souls

Courage waits not for the number of years.

⁵ What would you have him do against three?—Die!

⁶ "Where are you leading him? (asks Pauline).

"To death" (answers Felix).

"To glory" (replies Pauline).

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Gormas and kills him in a duel. Chimène throws herself at the feet of the king and begs him to punish Rodrigo, her filial duty overpowering her love. Rodrigo, however, offers his dagger to Chimène begging her to revenge herself on him. Her love for him triumphs, and Rodrigo departs for the wars against the Moors, against whom he wins a great victory, from which he returns home as the Cid,¹ and is lauded as the savior of his country. Chimène persists in avenging her father and promises to be the wife of him who kills the Cid in a duel. Don Sanche is the rival of the Cid, and when vanquished by the latter brings his sword to lay it at the feet of the king. Chimène, thinking the Cid has been killed, pours forth her grief. The king seeing this, apprises her of the Cid's victory in the duel, and decides that she marry the hero who has never ceased to love her.

Many lines of this beautiful, powerful, and original tragedy have passed into proverbs:

Ses rides sur son front ont gravé ses exploits.²

Rodrigue, as-tu du cœur? ³

A vaincre sans péril on triomphe sans gloire.⁴

Argument of *Horace*: The city of Æneas, and that of Romulus—Alba and Rome—have been at war for a long time. To put an end to useless shedding of blood, it has been resolved to choose from both sides three champions and to give first rank to that one of the two cities whose champions are victorious. Alba chooses three brothers by the name of Curiatii, and Rome three brothers by the name of Horatii.

¹ The subject of *Le Cid* is taken from the Spanish author Guilhelm de Castro. The title of Cid is said to have been given to Rodrigo de Bivar (the principal national hero of Spain, famous for his exploits in the wars with the Moors) because of the remarkable circumstance that five Moorish kings or chiefs acknowledge him in one battle as their Seid, which is the Arabic, as Cid is the Spanish word, for "chief." The name has become proverbial to designate a young, intrepid warrior of chivalrous character.

² The wrinkles on his brow have engraved his exploits.

³ Rodrigo, hast thou courage?

⁴ In conquering without danger, one triumphs without glory.

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But one Horatius has married Sabina, sister of the Curiatii, and one of the Curiatii is about to marry Camilla, sister of the Horatii. Horatius and Curiatius love their country equally; but Curiatius is overcome with emotion at being obliged to fight against those who will be doubly his brothers-in-law, while Horatius, on the contrary, from the moment when the interest of Rome is at stake, knows no longer Curiatius, and thinks only of his country.

One of the most sublime scenes is that where old Horatius, believing that his son has fled before the Curiatii, after having seen his two brothers slain before his eyes, is angered, and breaks out in threats against him. Soon he learns that his son did not flee; far from it, he killed the three Curiatii, and, proud of his victory, he returns laden with the spoils of the conquered. He meets his sister Camilla and asks her congratulations. Camilla cares little for the glory of Rome; what she sees in this triumph is the death of her betrothed, and she curses her native city in a famous tirade that well expresses the dramatic height attained in *Horace*:

Rome, l'unique objet de mon ressentiment!
Rome, à qui vient ton bras d'immoler mon amant!
Rome qui t'a vu naître et que ton cœur adore!
Rome, enfin, que je hais parce qu'elle t'honore!
Puissent tous ses voisins, ensemble conjurés,
Saper ses fondements encor mal assurés!
Et si ce n'est assez de toute l'Italie,
Que l'Orient contre elle à l'Occident s'allie;
Que cent peuples unis des bouts de l'univers
Passent pour la détruire et les monts et les mers!
Qu'elle-même sur soi renverse ses murailles!
Et de ses propres mains déchire ses entrailles!
Que le courroux du ciel allumé par mes vœux
Fasse pleuvoir sur elle un déluge de feux!
Puissé-je de mes yeux y voir tomber ce foudre,
Voir ses maisons en cendre, et tes lauriers en poudre,
Voir le dernier Romain à son dernier soupir,
Moi seule en être cause, et mourir de plaisir!¹

Rome, the sole object of my hatred!
Rome, for which thy arm has just slain my lover!
Rome, which gave thee birth and that thy heart idolizes!

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Hearing those blasphemies, Horatius rushes upon his sister and kills her. What will the Romans do? Shall they condemn Horatius who has just given them their victory? The judges condemn, but the people absolve him.

Horace is founded on the historical story related by Livy, of the combat between the Horatii and Curiatii. Of all the plays of Corneille, it is the most realistic in its dialogue, characters, and actions; the second and third acts are among the most sublime he has ever created.

Argument of *Cinna* (or, the Clemency of Augustus): The Emperor Augustus has intrusted Cinna, grandson of the great Pompey, with high offices and much power. Cinna loves Emilia, who although she returns his love, will not consent to marry him, unless he avenges the death of her father, who was executed by order of Augustus. Cinna then forms a conspiracy with the principal citizens of Rome, and comes to inform Emilia of the resolutions of the conspirators. His recital is scarcely ended, when a message of the Emperor summons him to the palace. Cinna, believing all to be lost, prepares to die; but Augustus, tired of the cares of empire, merely wishes to consult with him as to whether or not to abdicate. Cinna, who fears to lose the opportunity of revenging Emilia, prevails upon him with great eloquence to continue reigning. Then Maximus, another aspirant for the hand of Emilia, and jealous of Cinna, reveals the conspiracy to Augustus, who has the conspirators seized, but resolves upon clem-

Rome, in short, which I hate because she honors thee!
May all her neighboring states together conspiring
Undermine her still insecure foundations!
And if the whole of Italy be not strong enough,
Let the East with the West join against her;
May a hundred peoples from the ends of the earth
Cross, to destroy her, both mountains and seas!
May she tear down her walls over herself
And with her own hands pluck out her entrails!
May the wrath of Heaven kindled by my prayers
Cause a deluge of fire to pour down upon her!
May I with my own eyes watch the bolt fall,
See her houses reduced to ashes, and thy laurels to dust,
See the last Roman drawing his last breath;
I alone be the cause of it all, and die exulting!

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ency. He overwhelms Cinna with proofs of the plot and the remembrance of benefits conferred. Cinna expects only death, but Augustus forgives him, and disarms his hatred by the unexpected words: " Soyons amis, Cinna " (" Let us be friends, Cinna "), and unites him with Emilia, whose hatred yields to the royal clemency.

Voltaire said: " But, true or false, this clemency of Augustus is one of the noblest subjects of tragedy, one of the most beautiful lessons for princes. It points a great moral. This is, in my opinion, the master-work of Corneille, in spite of some defects."

Argument of *Polyeucte*. Christianity has penetrated into the Roman Empire, but is still persecuted. Felix, governor of Armenia, has given his daughter, Pauline, in marriage to Polyeucte, an Armenian lord whose credit may strengthen the fortune of Felix. Pauline loves Severus, a Roman general, and she yields, with regret, to the orders of her father. Edicts are issued commanding that Christians be put to death. Polyeucte converted by his friend, Nearches, becomes a Christian, and publicly breaks the images of the false gods. Meanwhile, Severus, who was believed dead, arrives in Armenia, having by his valorous deeds become a favorite of the Emperor Decius. Felix, for fear of the Emperor's wrath, and seeing in Polyeucte's death a chance for gaining the Emperor's favorite as a son-in-law, has Polyeucte arrested. Pauline wants to save her husband, whom she does not love; Severus unites his efforts with those of Pauline to appease Felix. But this ambitious villain sees in such generosity merely a trap, and hastens to destroy his son-in-law. Polyeucte persists in confessing his faith; he dies a martyr. His death arouses the admiration of Severus, who promises to procure the Emperor's protection for the new faith, and brings about the conversion of Felix and Pauline, whose words: " Je vois, je sais, je crois, je suis désabusée! " (I see, I know, I believe, I am undeceived) have become proverbial as expressing a profound conviction.

The " Sun King " of that Age of Splendor did not shed much of his gold upon Corneille. He was less generous to the creator of French drama than to any other writer of his reign. During the last months of his life, Corneille's illness

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exhausted his pecuniary resources. Boileau, who was informed of his sad position, went straightway to Versailles and offered to relinquish his own pension in favor of Corneille: "I cannot," he said to Madame de Montespan, "receive without shame, a pension from the King, while a man like Corneille is deprived of it." Louis XIV hastened to send one hundred louis to the illustrious patient, but two days later Corneille died at the age of seventy-eight years (1684). The nineteenth century would have justified his greatness and his genius, for Napoleon Bonaparte said of him: "I would have raised a poet like Corneille to the rank of a prince."

CHAPTER XIII

TRANSITION OF MEDÆVAL PHILOSOPHY—DESCARTES

DURING the Middle Ages, philosophy was the "hand-maiden" of theology. The church was the only moral power universally recognized. It treasured all the ancient culture—art, learning, science—everything centered in the monasteries. These were the schools (*scola*), the only places of instruction. Hence the term, scholasticism, which in reality meant rather a method than a doctrine.

Porphyry¹ in his celebrated *Introduction to the Categories*, translated into Latin by Boethius,² sets forth the problem: "Are the universals realities, or only abstract conceptions?" This question agitated the scolastics and brought about the quarrel of the "Universals," which gave rise to three philosophical schools in the Middle Ages: the Realist, the Nominalist, and the Conceptualist.

Professor Schwegler³ says: "Hand in hand with the development of Scholasticism in general proceeded that of the antithesis between nominalism and realism. The nominalists were those who held universal notions (*universalia*) to be mere names, empty conceptions without reality. The realists held firm by the objective reality of the universals (*universalia ante res*). The antithesis of these opinions took form first, as between Roscellinus,⁴ as nominalist and Anselm,⁵

¹ Melech, called Porphyry, a great philosopher and writer, was born in Syria about 232 A.D., and taught philosophy in Rome.

² Roman philosopher and poet of the sixth century.

³ Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, translated and annotated by James Hutchison Stirling, LL.D.

⁴ Roscellinus, born in France about 1150, died about 1220, called the founder of Nominalism.

⁵ Saint-Anselm, born in Italy 1033, died at Canterbury 1109.

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as realist, and it continued henceforth throughout the whole course of Scholasticism. There began as early as Abélard¹ (1079), an intermediate theory (conceptualism) as much nominalistic as realistic,² which after him remained the dominant one (*universalia in rebus*). In this view the universal is only conceived, only thought, but it possesses also objective reality in the things themselves, nor could it be abstracted from them unless it were virtually contained in them. All the arguments of this school are founded on the assumption, that whatever is syllogistically proved has exactly the same constitution in actuality that it has in logical thought."

Scholastic philosophy aimed to fit the truths of Christianity, and Anselm's doctrine—*credo ut intellegam* (I believe that I may understand)—is representative of that philosophy. In his *Proslogium*, he sets forth his ontological argument of the existence of God, which was combated by Gaunilon and Abélard.

The doctrine of Aristotle, which flourished among the Arabian schools, was brought to Europe by the Arabs in Spain, in the eleventh century. From the twelfth century until the Renaissance, the doctrines of Aristotle were represented as supreme authority in France.

In the thirteenth century, the University of Paris was divided into two parties: the Thomists or partisans of the philosophy of Saint-Thomas Aquinas² and the Scotists or partisans of Duns Scotus.³ Aquinas reproduced Aristotle's philosophy as he interpreted it from the Latin translations made from the Arabian. His doctrine was such an harmonious combination of reason and faith, that it became the theory officially taught in Catholic colleges. Duns Scotus

¹ Pierre Abélard, born at Le Pallet, near Nantes, France, in 1079, died 1142.

² Called the *Doctor Angelicus* and the *Doctor Universalis*.

³ Birthplace uncertain, Scotland or Ireland (Dunstanburgh Castle), in 1265 or 1274; died in Cologne. Dempster gives twelve arguments why Duns Scotus was a Scotchman. He studied at Oxford and became a Franciscan friar and later a professor of philosophy and Doctor of the University of Paris. Tradition says his lectures attracted thirty thousand students. His name Duns became proverbial for a learned man, and satirically used gave rise to the word dunce.

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opposed Aquinas, contending that God's omnipotence was not limited by reason. The Dominicans were more inclined to the Thomists, the Franciscans to the Scotists. This was a quarrel in which the clerical esprit de corps of the religious orders was as much a factor as the astuteness of the philosophers. On both sides were produced revelation, miracles, arguments. Duns Scotus, in his defense of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, is said to have refuted two hundred objections held by the Dominicans against this doctrine. His dialectical ingenuity in this controversy won for him the title of *Doctor Subtilis*.

The abuse of dialectics and of useless abstractions, led some philosophical minds to mysticism, and some to the natural sciences. Saint Bonaventure, surnamed the "Seraphic Doctor," one of the great theologians of the Middle Ages was a mystic, and taught that truth could only be attained with the aid of supernatural favor. Roger Bacon, an English monk living in Paris, was one of the greatest representatives of experimental science. On account of his great learning and of his inventions, he was called by his admirers, the "Doctor Mirabilis," but his enemies prosecuted him for sorcery. Bacon's persecution was due to the fact that he no longer made philosophy entirely subservient to theology, but opposed clerical dogma, insisted on the reformation of the system of teaching, and announced the reform of science and the church.

Philosophy identified with theology, a dangerous alliance, resulted in the proclamation of two truths—reason and religion. Roger Bacon and his disciple, William of Occam,¹ approached the experimental method, and they have sometimes been called the precursors of critical philosophy,² and sometimes of empiricism.³ Jean Buridan, like his master Occam, was a nominalist, but inclined to determinism,⁴ and to repre-

¹ Born in England 1270; died at Munich in 1347; doctor of philosophy and theology in Paris; was called the *Doctor Invincibilis* and *Singularis*.

² Analysis of reason. Kant was the founder of critical philosophy.

³ Method relying on direct experience and observation rather than on theory. John Locke was the originator of empiricism.

⁴ The doctrine that will is determined by motives.

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sent causeless motivation of the will as a deception. It was he who, in a discussion on free will, used the famous sophism of the ass, placed between a bushel of oats and a bucket of water, and dying of hunger through eternal indecision which to satisfy first, his thirst or his hunger. This argument, which made him more famous than his writings, cannot be found in any of his works, and is supposed to be a souvenir of his oral recitations.

The change from scholasticism—philosophy subservient to religion—to modern philosophy—independent reason—was affected by the growth of science, and the great revolutions in that field (Copernicus,¹ Galileo,² Kepler³); by the revival, with the Renaissance movement, of letters, and of all the ancient systems of philosophy: Platonism,⁴ Neoplatonism,⁵ Peripateticism,⁶ Pythagoricism,⁷ Skepticism,⁸ Epicureanism,⁹ Stoicism,¹⁰ and Mysticism.¹¹

The modern period of philosophy, shows a sharp opposition to the mediæval. Scientific inquiry turned the thoughts of men to the contemplation of nature, and this led to the independent reasoning of the individual, and consequent emancipation from established authority, and finally, to Skep-

¹ A Prussian, the founder of modern astronomy (1473-1543). He advanced the theory that the planets revolved around the sun.

² A famous Italian astronomer and physicist (1564-1642).

³ A famous German astronomer (1571-1630).

⁴ Doctrine of Plato, a famous Greek philosopher, disciple of Socrates, teacher of Aristotle, and founder of the Academic School, fifth century.

⁵ Philosophy originating with Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria in the third century.

⁶ The philosophy of Aristotle taught in the walks of the Lyceum at Athens (from peripatetic—walking about).

⁷ Doctrine of Pythagoras, a Greek philosopher and mathematician, sixth century, B.C.

⁸ Also Pyrrhonism, a school of philosophy founded by Pyrrho, a Greek philosopher, third century, B.C.

⁹ Doctrine of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, fourth century, B.C.

¹⁰ School of philosophy founded by Zeno, a Greek philosopher, third century, B.C.

¹¹ A sort of rationalistic philosophy of magic evolved from the union of the first discoveries in physics and the traditions of the Kabbala (a mystic philosophy of the Hebrew religion).

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ticism. Francis Bacon¹ and Descartes,² the founders of modern philosophy, were skeptics.

Descartes introduced a new method in the application of reason to metaphysics. He inaugurated the modern reaction by doing away with all prejudices and all presuppositions, by doubting everything he could, in order to see what refused to be doubted, leaving a starting point. The fundamental principle of his philosophy is *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). He started with this fundamental proposition and used it as a criterion for establishing other truths. These were his innate ideas. From the general, he deduced the particular, looking to mathematical science for his method and precision. His method, which, in its entirety, is known as Cartesianism, is summed up thus: "To attain the truth one must, once in his life, free himself from all received opinions, and reconstruct anew, and from the bottom, all the system of his knowledge." From Descartes's philosophy, resulted the antithesis of "being" and "thought," to this day the task of philosophy.

Bacon likewise banished prejudices and dogma, but differed diametrically from Descartes in his method: "Observe Nature, let Nature write her own record on the mind—all knowledge arises out of experience." His is the inductive method; by establishing the particular, he arrives at the general truths. Thus both the French and English schools started in revolt against mediævalism and dogma; but one system seized upon the essential activity of the mind, the other upon the assumption that the mind is passive.

Descartes's teachings influenced the trend of thought during the seventeenth century, and governed the intellectual world; people satisfied themselves by saying "The master has said it." Cartesianism is presented complete in the four principal works of Descartes: First *The Discours de la Méthode (pour bien conduire la raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences)*, published in French, in 1637; second, the

¹ Baron of Verulam and Viscount of St. Albans, was born in London in 1561, died at Highgate in 1626.

² René Descartes (Latinized Renatus Cartesius) was born at La Haye, in Touraine, in 1596, and that town now glories in the name of La Haye-Descartes.

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Méditations Philosophiques—a masterpiece in research, as well as in dialectics; third, *Les Principes*; fourth, *Le Traité de l'Âme*—which represented a psychology more distinct and more realistic than anything attempted up to that time, and whence the famous *Ethics of Spinoza*¹ was to proceed. Descartes was one of the foremost mathematicians of his day. His Geometry was considered a standard.

Descartes also rejected the superannuated formulas and the language of scholasticism, and made his doctrine accessible to all by editing a course of philosophy according to his principles as an accompaniment to the course taught in schools. He undertook, likewise, in the form of a dialogue, a popular exposition of the thoughts set forth in his *Discours*. In doing this, he not only furthered the propagation of his ideas, but assisted in the formation of the French language; and it was Descartes who created for the French a philosophic language capable of expressing the profoundest meditations. His *Discours de la Méthode* is the first work written throughout in the grand style of the seventeenth century.

¹ Baruch Spinoza, born in Amsterdam in 1632, died 1677. He was the great modern expounder of Pantheism.

CHAPTER XIV

PORT-ROYAL

IN 1204, a convent was founded by Mahaut de Garlande, in the valley of Chevreuse, on the domain of Porrois. A papal bull, in designating the abbey, used the phrase *de portu regio*, corrupted into Porrois, from which the term Port-Royal became officially recognized. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Abbess Angélique Arnauld, undertook to reform the religious order of this abbey,¹ and introduced the severe principles of Jansenius.² Duvergier de Hauranne, the abbot of Saint-Cyran, became the spiritual adviser of this religious order, and founded the society of Solitaires de Port-Royal—a Jansenist community—at Chevreuse. Although possessed of great erudition and eminent talent as a writer, the abbot of Saint-Cyran was content to lower himself to the level of the humblest intelligence, in order to teach the elementary truths of religion. To profound wisdom, he added a powerful eloquence which Richelieu considered “more dangerous than six armies.”

At this time, a great number of Catholics maintained that there had been introduced into the discipline of the Church certain abuses contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. These Catholics denied the absolute power of the popes, and accused the Jesuits of lax morality and of aspiring to universal domination. Jansenius and de Hauranne undertook to combat these conditions and to revive the “Augustinian tenets upon the inability of the fallen will, and upon efficacious grace.” Jansenius reduced to the form of doctrine the principles of the new reform, in a work which he entitled

¹ In 1626 this order established another convent of Port-Royal in Paris.

² Cornelis Jansen, or Jansenius (1585–1638), Bishop of Ypres, in Flanders, a Dutch Roman Catholic theologian, founder of Jansenism.

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Augustinus, because he claimed to have based all his arguments on the text of Saint Augustine. This famous work caused impassioned religious controversies during the entire century. The Jesuits, already at odds with Port-Royal, accused Jansenius of having reproduced the doctrines of Calvin on predestination, and denounced the work, which was condemned by Pope Urban VIII. Commissioners, to examine the book of Jansenius, were appointed, who, after long researches, extracted the "five propositions," which have become so famous. These propositions are not formulated in so many words in the *Augustinus*, but according to Bossuet, are the very soul of the book. The following are the five propositions: First: Some of God's commandments are impossible to the just who wish to observe them, and to that end exert all their strength. Second: In the state of fallen nature, interior grace is never resisted. Third: In the state of fallen nature as to merit or demerit, man need not enjoy liberty without necessity; it is enough for him to be free from any coercion. Fourth: The Semipelagians¹ admitted the necessity of antecedent grace for all good works, even for the beginning of faith; but they were heretics, because they said that man's will could submit to grace or resist it. Fifth: It is a Semipelagian error to say that Christ died for all men. From these propositions was evolved the doctrine that freedom of will was nonexistent, and that Christ did not die for all men, but only for the predestined. This was pushing the doctrine of grace to a point of resemblance with the fatalism of Calvin.

The question of divine grace agitated all the thinkers of the seventeenth century. One finds its trace in the tragedies

¹ Disciples of Cassianus, of Faustus, Bishop of Riez, and other theologians of the Gallican Church in the fifth century who wished to conciliate the orthodox opinions of Augustinus with Pelagianism. Pelagianism, the doctrine of Pelagius (British monk of fifth century), propagated in Africa by his disciple Celestinus, is summed up as follows: Adam's fall from grace affected him alone; every man will always be born innocent as Adam was before his fall; death is not the consequence of sin, but of the natural order; it lies in everyone's power to attain salvation by following the teachings of Christ. The Pelagian believed that man is "morally well," the Semipelagians that he is "morally sick," and Saint Augustine, that he is "morally dead."

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of Corneille and Racine, and in the letters of Madame de Sévigné. The Solitaires of Port-Royal devoted the greater part of their lives to its discussion. Jansenius maintained further that ecclesiastical jurisdiction belongs to the whole church, and that it should be exercised not only by the Holy See, but by councils—a kind of Christian Parliament, in which the popes have only the right of presidency.¹

The five propositions were submitted to Pope Innocent X, and after two years of discussion were condemned by the papal bull, *Cum occasione impressionis libri*. The Church of France was divided between the Jansenists and their opponents, the latter led principally by the Jesuits. After the imprisonment of Saint-Cyran² by Richelieu, Antoine Arnauld, the celebrated controversialist, called “the great Arnauld,” became the head of the Jansenists. In the society of the Solitaires there were many distinguished scholars, theologians, and moralists: Lemaistre de Sacy, Lancelot, Nicole, Nicolas Fontaine, Singlin, De Séricourt, Arnauld d’Andilly, and others. These men lived on a farm called Les Granges, dependent on the abbey. They were not bound by any vow or united among themselves by any rule. They utilized their time according to their capacities. The great Arnauld (Antoine) was the invincible, uncompromising, never failing scholar of them all. His friend Nicole, told him one day, that he (Nicole) was exhausted, and that at last he wished to rest from his long labors. “You, rest!” Arnauld said to him. “Well, will you not have all eternity to rest in?” Nicole taught philosophy and the humanities, and became one of the most distinguished professors of the Petites Écoles (little schools), opened by the Solitaires for the instruction of the young, and where Racine was a student.

Arnauld and Nicole spread reform by means of their writings. Nicole’s famous *Essais de morale*, were called by

¹ The Gallican doctrine does not place infallibility (which means that the Pope is divinely guarded from all errors in questions of faith and morals), in the Pope alone, but in the entire episcopal body united to its chief; whereas the ultramontanes consider the Pope to be the authority of all jurisdiction in the Church, and superior to the councils.

² In 1638 Saint-Cyran was confined in the dungeon of St. Vincent until 1643, the year of his death.

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Voltaire a masterpiece. Madame de Sévigné wrote about them to her daughter: "I am reading again his (Nicole's) great book. I should like to make it into a bouillon in order to swallow it." Often the Solitaires left their studious occupations, and, turning to manual labor, became wine-growers, laborers, gardeners, cobblers, carpenters. M. de la Rivière, an old and distinguished soldier, protected the forests of Port-Royal, and passed his time there praying, reading, and meditating. The famous duelist, M. de la Petitière, made shoes for the nuns; the Baron de Pontchâteau was a gardener, and Le Maistre cut wheat with the day laborers. This society, composed of men of all conditions, formed without civil or religious obligations, obeying no common chief, lived in the most perfect harmony. Lords and ladies of the court—people who aspired the same repose without wishing to renounce entirely their visits to the world—came to establish themselves about the abbey and Les Granges: the Duchess de Longueville, the Duchess de Luynes, the Duchess de Liancourt, Madame de Sévigné, the Prince de Conti, brother of the great Condé. It is said of him that after his conversion he showed such a submission to divine will, that it almost frightened his family; and that his children hid the story of Abraham from him, fearing lest he might at length wish to imitate the sacrifice of Isaac.

The Jansenists were supported by the majority of the members of Parliament,¹ by some bishops, and men of high rank and talent, but they were assailed by the Sorbonne, and struggled against the attacks of the Jesuits. Hence arose, in 1656, the celebrated *Lettres Provinciales* of Pascal. The success of the *Provinciales* secured to the Jansenists the favor of public opinion, and delayed their fall. The respite accorded them, however, was not long, and Port-Royal was approaching its destruction when it was saved by an extraordinary personage—the Duchess de Longueville (Anne Geneviève de Bourbon-Condé, of royal blood), heroine of the Fronde, born in the prison of Vincennes in 1619. After the peace of the Fronde, she saw herself abandoned by the

¹ *Parlement*, before 1789, a court of superior judicature which judged without appeal.

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world, and threw herself into the arms of religion with all the ardor which she had formerly shown for politics or for romantic adventures. She took M. de Sacy as instructor, and submitted herself to his severe counsels with great docility.¹ When the time of persecution came for Port-Royal, she was active in the service of the Solitaires. She concealed in her home Arnauld and Nicole, and their eccentricities sometimes added to her penitence. For example: the great Arnauld carried good comradeship and freedom from conventionality even to the point of taking off his garters in the evening, while sitting by the fireplace in the presence of the Princess; "which made her suffer a little," says Madame de Sévigné. After two years of effort and negotiations, Madame de Longueville succeeded in triumphing over the Pope, Louis XIV, and the Jesuits. Port-Royal obtained permission to repeople its monastery, to reopen its schools and reunite its scattered Solitaires (1668). The same virtues, the same piety, the same austerities were renewed. But with the death of the Princess in 1679, disappeared the only protector of the Jansenists in favor with Louis XIV, who regarded Port Royal with ill-will. After a series of persecutions the society was forcibly dissolved toward the end of this reign. A bull of the Pope suppressed the monastery, and the King caused the house, the church, and the farm of Les Granges, as well as the neighboring habitations to be destroyed (1710). The influence of Port-Royal continued, and Jansenism² had some adherents in France until the nineteenth century

The history of Port-Royal is important in the literary history of the seventeenth century, for this celebrated period included within its scope men eminent both by their genius and their virtues, and produced works on religion, morality, logic, and grammar, which exercised a powerful influence, religious and literary, upon this memorable epoch. But the inflexible, un pitying doctrines of the Solitaires in regard to grace and predestination elicited the following from Bos-

¹ "The true crown of Madame de Longueville," says Sainte-Beuve, "which we must all the more revere in her in so far as she did not perceive it, in so far as she covered it, as it were, with her hands, in so far as she lowered it and hid it—is the crown of humility."

² At the present day Jansenism is continued in Holland.

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suet, although sharing many of their views: "they are men who hold men's consciences captive under very unjust rigors, who can endure no weakness, who always drag hell behind them, who cause virtue to appear too severe, the Gospel excessive, Christianity impossible."

PASCAL

Blaise Pascal, born at Clermont in 1623, was one of the greatest French writers and philosophers. He was also an illustrious mathematician and physicist. At the age of twelve he is said to have formulated without the help of any book Euclid's thirty-second proposition in geometry; at sixteen, he wrote a treatise on conic sections which surprised Descartes; when eighteen, he invented a calculating machine. We owe to him the laws of the specific gravity of the air, the equilibrium of liquids, the arithmetical triangle, and the calculation of probabilities, the principle of the hydraulic press, and the theory of the cycloid. He was a profound moralist, a subtle and vigorous dialectician, a great orator, and finally, a great poet in the *Pensées*, because of an imagination now somber and tragic, now inspired by faith and illumined by hope. Descartes had created the philosophic language and style; but eloquent philosophy, without ceasing to be really philosophic, dates from Pascal. He held that no system of philosophy solves the enigma of life, because every system perceives but one side of our nature, and all systems destroy one another: nature puzzles the Pyrrhonists and reason puzzles the dogmatists. One day, at the bridge of Neuilly, Pascal was the victim of a runaway accident, as a result of which, it is said, he had hallucinations which often made him see an abyss beside him ready to engulf him. He retired to Port-Royal, where he lived an ascetic life.

In consequence of a dispute between Arnauld and the Jesuits on the questions *de facto et de jure* in the propositions contained in the *Augustinus*, Arnauld was condemned by the Sorbonne. Blaise Pascal, at the solicitations of his friends accepted the task of publicly defending Port-Royal against the Jesuits, and published, from 1656 to 1657, eighteen anonymous letters, the comprehensive title of which is *Lettres*

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écrites par Louis de Montalte à un Provincial de ses amis et aux Révérends Pères Jésuites sur le sujet de la Morale et de la Politique de ces Pères (Letters written by Louis de Montalte to one of his friends in the Provinces, and to the Reverend Jesuit Fathers, on the subject of the Morals and the Politics of these Fathers). In the first *Provinciale*, Pascal treats the difficult question of grace. Beginning with the fourth letter, he carries the fight against the Jesuits on another ground. Nevertheless, this masterpiece, which fixed the French language and has remained an inimitable model, was not a work of predilection on the part of Pascal. He was silently preparing the materials for a great work which would demonstrate the truth and the greatness of Christianity, but which death did not permit him to finish, and whose scattered elements, published under the title of *Pensées*, sufficed to assure for their author the admiration of posterity.

The crude memoranda of Pascal's *Pensées* are to-day in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* of Paris, open to the public. Carefully pasted on sheets of paper, they are bound in one volume, which is one of the most curious of that wonderful collection. It is due to the work of Cousin, Faugère, Sainte-Beuve, Astié, and Havet, that the plan which inspired Pascal to make the detached sketches was brought to light.

We recall "the abyss of Pascal" (in allusion to the runaway accident mentioned above), in order to characterize certain social or moral problems which frighten by their depth those who seek to sound them. "The grain of sand" of Pascal, in the *Pensées* (an allusion to Cromwell's death), has become an original locution to express the idea that minute causes can engender great results. Here are a few extracts from the *Pensées*:

"Thus all our life passes. We seek rest while combating some obstacles; and if we have surmounted them rest becomes unbearable."

"We are sometimes better corrected by the sight of evil than by the example of good; and it is well to accustom oneself to profit by the bad, since it is so common, while the good is so rare."

"For, finally, what is man in nature? A Nothing in regard to the Infinite, a Whole in regard to nothing, a medium

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between nothing and all. Infinitely far from understanding the extremes, the end of things and the principle of them are invincibly hidden from him in an impenetrable secret; equally incapable of seeing the Nothing whence he is drawn and the Infinite in which he is engulfed."

CHAPTER XV

THE CLASSIC FRENCH SCHOOL

WITH the advent of such masters as Racine, Boileau, Molière, and La Fontaine, French literature, from being précieuse, burlesque, and courtly, became classical,¹ a term used with different acceptations, but which means here a combination of rationalism with a sense of the æsthetic. The classical period embraces two centuries, and has produced the greatest works the French possess.

RACINE

Jean Racine was born in 1639, at La Ferté-Milon. Orphaned at the age of four, he was under the guardianship of a grandmother and aunt, both ardent Jansenists, who sent him to Port-Royal, where he was reared under the influence and care of Le Maistre, Nicole, Hamon, and Lancelot. Racine showed from his earliest years a very strong taste for poetry, and especially for the tragic poets. Often he was lost in the forests of the abbey with a copy of Euripides in his hand. His greed for knowledge took him everywhere in search of books, which he pored over in secret. The Greek romance of the loves of Theagenes and Chariclea fell into his hands. He was reading it eagerly, when Claude Lancelot, "le chef de la secte hellénique," caught him in the act, tore the book from him and threw it into the fire. A second copy met the same fate. Racine bought a third; in order to insure its con-

¹ In the *Noctes Atticæ* of Aulus Gellius the word *classicus* is applied to writers of distinction and merit. The most remarkable classical epochs of literature are: the centuries of Pericles, of Augustus, of Leo X (or de Medici), and of Louis XIV.

tents from the flames, he learned it by heart and carried it to Lancelot saying: "You may burn this one like the others." Port-Royal intended that their pupil should be a lawyer; but scarcely had Racine finished his course in philosophy at the college of Harcourt (to-day the Lycée Saint-Louis), when he entered the literary world with an ode on the marriage of the King. This poem, entitled *La Nymphe de la Seine* (on the marriage of Louis XIV with Marie-Thérèse), brought him, by recommendation of Chapelain, a gift of one hundred louis and a pension of six hundred livres with the title of *homme de lettres*. This was a public scandal in the eyes of the Solitaires of Port-Royal who had vainly warned him by letter and threats of excommunication to stop writing.

In order to turn the young man aside from poetry, he was led to hope for a benefice, and was sent to Uzès to his uncle, the vicar Antoine Sconin, who set him to studying theology; but his true vocation conquered and he returned to Paris. In 1662 he composed a piece *sur la convalescence du roi*, which gained for him a presentation at court. *Les Frères Ennemis*, composed at Uzès, was produced and met with some success; but much more successful was *Alexandre*, given in 1665, when Racine was twenty-five years old. At Paris he sought and obtained illustrious and useful friendships with La Fontaine, Boileau, and Molière. This was the epoch when the four friends met at the fashionable cabarets, where men of letters, such as Chapelle, Furetière, and the great lords, the Dukes de Vivonne, de Nantouillet, and others eagerly sought their society. Racine's relations with Molière were of brief duration; but while ceasing to be intimate, the mutual esteem of these two great men was undiminished. The friendship of Boileau and Racine remained unchanged during forty years. At first Racine was only a successful imitator of Corneille; the beautiful passages of *La Thébàide* and of *Alexandre* may be characterized as strong impressions produced by great models on a young man destined, in his turn, to become a master of his art. It was in writing *Andromaque* (1667) that Racine found himself. He had just caused *Alexandre* to be played when he became the friend of Boileau, three years older than himself, who had already published

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several of his own satires. "I have a surprising facility in making my verses," the young tragic author naïvely said. "I wish to teach you to make them with difficulty," answered Boileau, "and you have enough talent to learn soon."

Andromaque was the result of this new effort, and the true début of Racine. He was henceforth irrevocably compromised in the cause of the stage. Nicole, while attacking Desmarets, wrote with all the rigor of Port-Royal: "A maker of romances and a theatrical poet are public poisoners, not of bodies but of souls." Racine in defense of dramatic art wrote two letters which were so bitter, so incisive, and so insulting to Port-Royal, that Boileau prevented him from publishing the second. In 1668 he staged *Les Plaideurs*, which had been requested of him by his friends, and partly composed during the repasts they often had in common in the famous cabaret of the *Mouton blanc*. "I put into it," said Racine, "only a few barbarous words of the chicanery I remembered in a suit at law, which neither I nor my judges have ever well understood." *Les Plaideurs*, composed of reminiscences partly from the "Wasps," by Aristophanes and partly from Racine's own lawsuit when he was prior of Epinay, is an amusing satire of life in the law courts; of the judges, ridiculed in the characteristics of Perrin Dandin; of the litigants, personified in Chicaneau and the Countess of Pimbesche; of the lawyers, characterized in Petit-Jean and l'Intimé, who in their pleadings, give way to bombastic and pedantic eloquence. After the first failure of the play, the royal players one day risked a performance before the King. Louis XIV was struck by it, and believed that he did not dishonor his dignity or his taste by bursts of laughter so great that the courtiers were astonished. The delighted players, on leaving Versailles, returned straight to Paris, and went to awaken Racine. Three coaches coming in the night, in a street where coaches are rarely seen at any time, awakened the neighborhood. People went to the windows and, since it was known that a censor had made a great uproar against the comedy of the *Plaideurs*, no one doubted in the least that the poet who had dared to ridicule the judges in the public theater would be punished. On the morrow all Paris believed him to be in prison. On the contrary, he triumphed with

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*Britannicus*¹ (1669); whereupon the King stopped dancing at the court balls for fear of resembling Nero.

Bérénice was a contest between Corneille and Racine for the entertainment of the Duchess of Orleans, Henrietta of England; and Racine won, without much glory. *Bérénice* was played at the Hôtel de Bourgogne by a famous actress, Mademoiselle Champmeslé, who also played an important rôle in the life of the great Racine.

In 1672 *Bajazet* was represented and showed a marked contrast with *Bérénice*; from ancient history and Rome, the scene passed to contemporary history and Constantinople. Racine's reputation was constantly growing; he had staged *Mirthridate* and *Iphigénie*. *Phèdre* was produced in 1677, and an intrigue of the great lords at first caused it to fail. Pradon, a tragic poet, who pretended to rival Racine, acting on the advice of his protectors, composed a play which was to be performed in opposition to the one Racine was known to be writing, and which had *Phèdre* for its subject. Boileau riddled Pradon with his satire. A cabal had been set in motion to secure the triumph of Pradon and the fall of Racine.² The plotters, led by the Duchess de Bouillon, rented in advance for several representations the two theaters where the two plays were to be given. Pradon's play had an immense audience, while Racine's was enacted to empty seats. However, from the time the friends of Pradon ceased to produce his play, the public went in crowds to witness Racine's masterpiece, but chagrin and wounded pride had done their work in the poet's soul: he abandoned dramatic art in the full glory of his career at thirty-seven years of age. He reconciled himself with the pious Port-Royalists, and wished to become a Chartreux; but his confessor turned him away from his design, and his friends married him off to Catherine Romanet. Madame Racine was an excellent person, modest and devoted, but prosaic, who never went to the theater and scarcely knew the titles of her husband's plays. She brought him something of a fortune. In addition to this, the king had given the great

¹ *Britannicus* is an answer to the critics who reproached Racine for writing only of love. (Although love is not totally absent from the play.)

² It has been said that Racine's manuscript was taken from him. Racine had previously accused Pradon of plagiarism.

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poet a pension, and Colbert had named him treasurer at Moulins¹ Racine had seven children. He devoted his life to them with pious solicitude, but when his children were ill, he said with the anxiety of paternal tenderness: "Why did I not become a Chartreux"? The *Mémoires* of his father, written by his son Louis, depict Racine in all the austere charm of his domestic life. "He left everything to come to see us," writes this filial biographer. "An equerry of the duke came one day to tell him that he was expected to dinner at the home of Condé. 'I shall not have the honor to go,' said he; 'it is more than a week since I have seen my wife and children, who are happy in the anticipation of eating a very fine carp with me to-day. I cannot help but dine with them.' And when the equerry insisted, he had the carp brought in: 'Judge for yourself if I can disappoint these poor children who have planned to entertain me, and would have no more pleasure if they ate this dish without me.'" "He was born tender-hearted," adds Louis Racine. "He was tender toward God when he returned to Him, and from the day he went back to those who, in his childhood, had taught him to know God, he was tender toward them without reserve. He was so all his life to his friends, to his wife and his children."

The duties of historiographers to the king, titles which both Racine and Boileau received from Louis XIV, drew the friends already so intimate into closer communion. Racine and Boileau were preparing to depart with the king for the campaign of 1677; but the besieged cities opened their gates before the poets had left Paris. "How is it that you did not have the curiosity to see a siege?" the king asked them on his return. "The trip was not long." "It is true, Sire," answered Racine, who always was the more skillful courtier of the two, "but our tailors were too slow. We ordered campaigning clothes; when they brought them, the fortified places which your majesty was besieging were taken." The following year they were obliged to accompany the king on

¹ Louis XIV granted frequent benefits to men of letters. Racine received almost fifty thousand livres from him, and was named the historiographer of the king. Boileau received the same title.

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his campaigns, and their awkwardness on horse, their ignorance of military things, called forth many epigrams and anecdotes at their expense. Finally, Boileau, who suffered from ill health, and was of a morose disposition, remained in Paris. His friend wrote to him constantly, sometimes from the camp, sometimes from Versailles, whither he returned with the king. The correspondence of the two friends have a great literary interest.

After twelve years of cessation from dramatic work, Madame de Maintenon begged Racine to compose for the young ladies of Saint-Cyr "some sort of moral or historical poem from which love might be entirely banished." His compliance with this request enriched French literature with the delicate elegy of *Esther* (1689). "Madame de Maintenon was charmed with its invention and execution," said Madame de la Fayette. "The play represented, in a way, the fall of Madame de Montespan and Madame de Maintenon's own elevation; the difference being that Esther was a little younger and less 'précieuse' in point of piety." The brilliant success of this play inspired the poet to write another masterpiece, *Athalie* (1691), drawn from the same source. The young ladies of Saint-Cyr, in the uniform of the house, performed it quite simply at Versailles before Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon, in a room without a stage. When the players acted it in Paris, it was pronounced cold and was not a success. Racine foresaw failure, but Boileau said to him: "I am sure that this is your best work, the public will return to it."¹ This beautiful inspiration into which the poet put his heart, his intelligence, his faith, and his art, is considered one of the most perfect plays. His *Cantiques spirituels*, composed in 1694, are called the *Chant du Cygne* (Song of the Swan), for they were his last verses.

The tragedies of Racine may be divided into three classes: the first class includes plays borrowed from the drama of "Euripides"; his historical tragedies form the second class; in the third class are his tragedies inspired by the Bible. Madame de Maintenon had requested Racine to make a com-

¹ The public did return to it, but it was fifty years later, after Racine's death.

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position concerned with the misery of the people as resulting from a prolonged war—a *mémoire* which she wished to present to Louis XIV. But the king, who allowed no commentaries of any sort, was discontented with the audacity of Racine—"who, because he could make verses, imagined himself able to govern a State," and he made it plain that he wished no longer to see the poet. Racine, who sincerely loved the king, was much affected by this order. He was already an invalid; his illness increased, and he died a short time afterwards, in 1699.

"Racine," says Faguet, "is our greatest tragic author, as Molière is the greatest comic one. There has been an alternation in France between the glory of Racine and that of Corneille, and, according to the epoch, people prefer the one and believe themselves obliged to disparage the other. Actually, Racine is the favorite. It is incontestable that he at least deserves to be called one of the greatest French tragic authors, and one of the four or five greatest tragic writers of all literature."

"Corneille," says Fleury, "depicted persons who mastered their passions; Racine depicted those who allowed themselves to be governed by them. Instead of exciting admiration by grandeur, Racine excited compassion for suffering." He made himself the delineator of tender sentiments, especially of love; he is the painter of love,¹ such as he conceives it, violent, impetuous, jealous, often criminal: "C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée."² (*Phèdre*.)

Larroumet notes that Racine made jealousy the dominant motive in four of his plays. "The greatest misery which love can call forth is jealousy. The cries of rage which Roxane³ and Phèdre utter are without equal in forcefulness

¹ In a poem, *A Racine*, written for the celebration of the anniversary of Racine's birth, at the Théâtre-Français, in 1888, George Lefèvre calls him *Poète des amants* (poet of lovers). "This eternal question of love," said Napoleon, "with its sweetish tone and its fastidious background, was the sole occupation of everybody, the lot of idle society. It is therefore not exactly Racine's fault if his works are impregnated with love, but rather the fault of the times."

² "It is Venus in her entirety clinging to her prey."

³ "*Bajazet* est une grande tuerie" (*Bajazet* is a great slaughter), wrote Madame de Sévigné.

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and truth. Roxane is the embodiment of jealousy whom the cause of her deception instills with the thirst of blood:

Dans ma juste fureur observant le perfide,
Je saurai le surprendre avec son Atalide
Et, d'un même poignard les unissant tous deux,
Les percer l'un et l'autre, et moi-même après eux.¹

(BAJAZET.)

It is the woman who plays the principal rôle in Racine's plays; one speaks of the heroines of Racine and of the heroes of Corneille, for according to Marivaux, style has sex. La Bruyère's simple criticism was: "Corneille is more moral, Racine more natural."

With Racine, indeed, the dramatic motive was not admiration, but tenderness. Thus he turns us back upon ourselves; his art gains in truth what it loses in loftiness. In spite of the differences which distinguish him from his predecessor, there is between them a resemblance which their epoch imposed on them. Both are spiritual in the highest degree; both seek the source of their power exclusively in moral nature. They disdain or ignore the exterior appearance, the material movement of the stage, the prepared color of history. Larroumet writes: "The best eulogy one can give the tragedies of Racine is that it is impossible to imagine them otherwise than they are. The facts could not proceed in any other manner; one finds nothing to add, nothing to retract. This art gives the illusion of being life itself.

"Both Corneille and Racine have attained the highest degree of tragic genius, but Corneille looked to the heroic, that is to say, the exceptional; Racine regarded humanity as it was. Thus they represent the two supreme forms of tragic art—the one idealistic, the other realistic."

Although Racine in his conceptions is less sublime than Corneille, although he reduces his personages to more human and more natural proportions, his characters are ennobled,

¹ In my justified rage watching the unfaithful one;
I shall know how to surprise him with his Atalide
And, joining them with the same dagger,
Pierce them both, and myself after them.

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not by moral perfections, but by the free development of their nature; thereby they attain a higher degree of being—that is to say, of beauty. Within this marvelous sphere, peopled by kings and heroes, the air is less heavy on those noble brows; the vulgar necessities of life no longer oppress the breast; hearts beat with no other obstacle than the shock of rival passions or the impassable limits of human conditions. The passions of the court become the passions of humanity, and the work of Racine will remain imperishable like them. But it is especially by his style that Racine envelopes his heroes with an ideal magnificence. Here one is tempted to hold to the opinion of Voltaire, who suggested that all criticism of the plays be confined to a line written at the bottom of each page, thus: “ Beautiful, sublime, harmonious! ”

ANDROMAQUE

After the capture of Troy, Andromache, the widow of Hector, and her son Astyanax have become the slaves of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, and son of Achilles. Pyrrhus, affianced to Hermione, daughter of Menelaus and Helen, defers his marriage from day to day, because he has fallen in love with Andromache. The Greek generals, conquerors of Ilium, have charged Orestes, who loves Hermione, to recapture Astyanax, whom they would put to death. Pyrrhus, angered because Andromache wishes to remain true to her vows to her dead husband, threatens to deliver Astyanax, if she does not consent to marry him. Andromache finding him inflexible decides to wed him to save her son, but decides also to kill herself after the nuptials. The news of this marriage infuriates Hermione; she commands Orestes to kill Pyrrhus at the altar, promising him her hand as reward. Orestes consents, and Pyrrhus is slain, but when Hermione hears that her lover is dead, she repulses the murderer with horror, and kills herself on the body of Pyrrhus. Orestes then becomes the victim of the avenging Furies.

BRITANNICUS

The subject of this play is borrowed from the thirteenth book of the Annals of Tacitus. The poet depicts Nero upon

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the threshold of crime, still hesitating between good and evil, between Burrhus and Narcissus. Agrippina, his mother, thirsting for power, has formed the design of marrying Junia to Britannicus, son of the Emperor Claudius and adopted brother of Nero, in order to gain for herself the affection of this young prince, and to make of him her support in time of need against Nero himself. Nero, in order to foil this plan, has Junia carried off, and falls in love with her at first sight. He orders Britannicus to renounce his love; on his refusal he has him arrested, and plans his death. The intervention of Agrippina seems to disarm the anger of the Emperor, but in reality adds to it a new degree of hypocritical hatred. Burrhus, his governor, brings him back for a moment to better sentiments, but Narcissus prevails upon him to consummate the crime. Britannicus is accordingly invited to a banquet, in the course of which he is poisoned. This tragedy, which, in the judgment of La Harpe, "unites the art of Tacitus to the art of Virgil, and depth of thought to purity of style," is in the eyes of Voltaire "the play of connoisseurs."

BÉRÉNICE

Bérénice treats of the love of the Emperor Titus for the beautiful Jewess Bérénice, whom for reasons of State he cannot marry. The brilliant lines in which Bérénice describes the greatness of Titus express the splendor of the court life of Louis XIV.

De cette nuit Phénice, as-tu vu la splendeur?
Tes yeux ne sont-ils pas tout pleins de sa grandeur?
Ces flambeaux, ces bûchers, cette nuit enflammée (etc.).¹

Racine did not forget that these lines were to be spoken before the young king—"a Titus to many of the women of the court whose fondest wish would have been to be his Bérénice." It is the drama of the court. It is the cult of the royal personage. The individuality of great men was often suppressed to conform to the ideas of that monarch whose

¹ Saw you, Phenice, the splendor of this night?
Are not your eyes filled with his greatness?
Those torches, those funeral piles, that lurid night.

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absolutism governed genius as it dominated the intellectual life of the people. Racine, Corneille, even Molière, were subjected to it. The poetic freedom of the great dramatists was still more curtailed by the enforced adherence to the so-called Aristotelian unities: unity of place, of time, and of action. It was an observance imposed upon them by a dictum of the French Academy approved by Louis XIV. To ignore it meant failure; yet Corneille's *Discours des trois unités* plainly shows how great a hindrance it was to dramatic development.¹

PHÈDRE

Phædra, pursued by the anger of Venus, has fallen in love with Hippolytus, son of her husband and another woman. In her hopelessness, she wishes to die; but hearing that her husband is dead she discloses her sentiments to Hippolytus, who repulses her with horror. Suddenly it is learned that her husband, Theseus, is returning. Phædra, in despair, lets her nurse accuse Hippolytus of having made the declaration which she herself had made to him. Theseus, too credulous, banishes his son from his palace, and begs Neptune to punish him; but, moved by the distress of Phædra, he soon repents of his imprudent order. It is too late; the horses of Hippolytus, frightened by a marine monster, have run away and crushed his body on the rocks. Phædra is silent. The play is an admirable portrayal of a woman's character. It includes a great number of beautiful verses:

Et l'avare Achéron ne lâche point sa proie.²

Ainsi que la vertu, le crime a ses degrés.³

Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon cœur.⁴

BAJAZET

This is a Turkish play, the *mise-en-scène* of which treats of a plot in the Seraglio, related to Racine by the French

¹ Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*.

² And hungry Acheron relinquishes not his prey.

³ Like virtue, crime has its degrees.

⁴ Daylight is no purer than the bottom of my heart.

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Ambassador for the Orient. The persons who figure in it had scarcely died when Racine put them on the stage. The Sultan Amurat goes to besiege Babylon; during his absence, the favorite Sultana, Roxane, in league with the Grand Vizier Acomat, plots to enthrone the young brother of the Sultan, Bajazet, with whom she is in love, and to have Amurat assassinated upon his return. Bajazet, who loves another woman, resists and loses time. Amurat returns, and puts to death the guilty ones, excepting Acomat, who succeeds in escaping. The verse spoken by Acomat is often quoted:

Nourri dans le harem, j'en connais les détours.¹

ESTHER

The Jewess Esther has been chosen among a thousand rivals to become the wife of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, who has repudiated his wife, the proud Vashti. By the advice of Mordecai, her uncle, Esther has concealed from the king her origin and her race. Faithful to the God of Abraham, she worships him in secret; she has gathered about her some young Israelitish women whom she instructs in the law of the Lord, and in the midst of whom she freely bewails the misfortunes of Jerusalem. New misfortunes threaten the people of God. An enemy of Israel, the Amalekite Aman, has forced from the king an edict that all the Jews scattered through the empire be put to death. Esther presents herself before Ahasuerus; she solicits and obtains the favor of receiving the king at her table; Aman is to be present at the feast. It is in the presence of the persecutor of the Jews that she casts herself at the feet of the king and implores grace for her people, at the same time declaring herself to be a Jewess. Touched by the tones of the queen, and enlightened concerning the sinister projects of his favorite Aman, Ahasuerus sends him to the gibbet which had been prepared for Mordecai, repeals the edict of proscription, and puts an end to the captivity of the Jews.

The choruses are an innovation which Racine introduced into his plays, *Esther* and *Athalie*, in imitation of the Greek

¹ Brought up in the harem, I know its by-ways.

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tragedies, reviving thus the most beautiful inspirations of the prophets—and they are masterpieces of lyric poetry. In the ancient tragedies the chorus represented the crowd (people) moralizing on the events. In *Esther* the young Israelites who compose the chorus participate in the action: they suffer, they tremble, they hope, and their chants express their sorrow and their enthusiasm.

ATHALIE

The subject of *Athalie* is taken from the Bible, in the Fourth Book of Kings. Athaliah, daughter of Achab and of Jezebel, King and Queen of Israel, had married Jehoram, King of Judah. Their son, Ochosias, reigned but one year. At his death, Athaliah caused the children of Ochosias, her grandchildren, to be massacred, in order to get possession of the throne of Judah. One only of these children, Joas, escaped her cruelty, and was reared secretly in the temple by Josabet, wife of the High Priest. Athaliah, frightened by a dream, enters the temple of the Jews. There she sees a child resembling the one whom a prophetic dream has shown her as her enemy; it is Joas. She wishes to know who he is, to see him, to question him; she wants the High Priest to put him into her hands. Joas secretly arms all the priests, all the Levites; and when the queen, lured by an equivocal promise, presents herself to take possession of the treasures of the temple and the child who terrifies her, the revolted priests seize her, drag her out, and throttle her in the name of young Joas, whom they proclaim King of Judah, and legitimate heir of his father, Ochosias.

In *Athalie* was reached the culmination of dramatic ability: the temple in Jerusalem which is the scene of action, the tenor of the plot, all lend to this last masterpiece of Racine's an atmosphere mysterious and grand, augmented by the majesty of the language. Lyricism, the integral part of the Greek tragedies, resumes its place in the choruses, which spring from the nature of the drama itself.

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BOILEAU

Nicolas Boileau Despréaux¹ was born in Paris in 1636. Son of a magistrate, born of a long line of lawyers, he was destined for the study of law, which he soon deserted for literary pursuits. He was an ethical and didactic writer, very much preoccupied with questions of style and of versification; furious in his criticisms of bad taste, and a scourge of mediocre writers. His works consist of twelve epistles, twelve satires, and two poems—the one didactic, the other for recital. His verses are very well worked out; their rhythmic and regular form impress them easily on the mind, and a great number have become proverbs. The *Epîtres* are generally superior to the *Satires*; four, especially, are masterpieces of their kind. The epistle on the passage of the Rhine, under the eyes of Louis XIV, “whom his grandeur attached to the bank,” is a magnificent epic. The epistle to Lamoignon, in which the author describes the country house where he lives during the summer, on the banks of the Seine, between Paris and Rouen: the houses hollowed from the rock on the slope of the hills, their chimneys, with exposed masonry, rising from the ground; the “unplanted willows, the walnut trees insulted by the passers-by”—all this forms a fresh rural picture; and these pictures are very rare in the seventeenth century. We must furthermore note the indignant protest addressed by Boileau to Racine against the criticism of *Phèdre*; and, finally, the Eulogy of Truth in his ninth epistle:

Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable;
Il doit régner partout, et même dans la fable.²

While Racine and Molière were giving their masterpieces to France, Boileau, their friend, was teaching the public to understand and admire them. Before his time, an uncertain

¹ He added Despréaux to his name in order to distinguish himself from his brothers.

² Nothing but Truth is beautiful, Truth alone is worthy of love,
It should reign everywhere and even in the fable.

De Musset changed the first line to: “Rien n'est vrai que le beau.”
(Nothing but the beautiful is true.)

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taste admitted in confusion the good as well as the mediocre; when he appeared, there were some models, but no defined principles. The task of Boileau was to clear up the confused art of the seventeenth century; to assign to each man and each work the proper rank in public esteem. It is his glory to have done this with an almost infallible discernment, with an intrepid courage; and, finally, to have crystallized his judgments in a form so apt, in a language so perfect, that no one will be tempted to revise, and thereby weaken, them. Common sense and the sovereignty of reason in matters of taste go to make the durable merit of Boileau's doctrine. Here is an element of resemblance to the other great men of his century. It is the spirit of Descartes transferred to poetry.

The poetical career of Boileau may be divided into three periods. In the first, the satirist attacks the mediocre poets with all the impetuosity of youth; he fights untiringly against the false standard of taste imported from Spain and Italy. It is at this time that he published nine satires, of which four are exclusively literary, while the others contain a number of unexpected sallies against bad writers which are the more stinging because of their unexpectedness. "The satires belong," says Voltaire, "to the first manner of this great artist—a manner very much inferior, it is true, to the second, but far superior to that of all the writers of his time, if you except Racine." In the second period, Boileau abandoned satire: he had destroyed; it was now a question of reconstructing. At this time appeared *l'Art Poétique*, in which he formulated and coördinated the literary doctrine he had just made prevalent. On this, his masterpiece in four cantos, he worked for five years deliberately and with the utmost care. It served the French as a poetical code for one and a half centuries, and its absolute authority was overthrown only by the Romanticists of the nineteenth century. In the same year (1674) he published the first four cantos (there are six) of the *Lutrin*¹ (Lectern)—an ingenious and elegant pleasantry, a masterpiece of versification worthy of a subject less shallow.

This poetical masterpiece deals with a chorister who dearly loves to have himself seen by the faithful while he

¹ After *La Secchia Rapita* (The Rape of the Bucket) of Tassoni.

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fulfills his ecclesiastical duties. By way of a joke, it is planned to place in the church a large pulpit, or reading desk, that will hide him completely from the public. This is done during the night; when morning comes the furious chorister breaks the new desk in pieces. A dispute arises; it becomes a battle in which the books stacked in the shop of a neighboring bookseller serve as projectiles. The scene is laid in Paris, at the Sainte-Chapelle, and in the Palais de Justice. The quarrel had actually taken place, and *Le Lutrin* was the result of a bet: Boileau in conversation with M. de Lamoignon held that the slightest circumstance might serve as a subject for an epic poem. "Prove it and make one on this quarrel of the Sainte-Chapelle," replied Lamoignon. "Why not?" responded Boileau. "One ought never to challenge a fool, and I am sufficiently one not only to undertake it, but also to dedicate it to Monsieur, the First President (Lamoignon)." Boileau kept his word with the result we have observed: it bears out his sentiments expressed in his famous *Art Poétique*:

Sans la langue en un mot, l'auteur le plus divin
Est toujours, quoi qu'il fasse, un méchant écrivain.¹

In the *Lutrin* a less aggressive spirit animated the critic; his mocking was more joyous. He wrote the first nine epistles; the seventh, addressed to Racine, united in the highest degree all the qualities of excellence that assured the glory of the great French satirist. French criticism had only recently become a genre; it had not yet attained any great development. Boileau created the style of literary criticism in verse as he was also the creator of the satire and the epistle in France. The most remarkable of his satires are: *Le Repas ridicule* and *Les Embarras de Paris*, which, however, are inferior to the satire entitled, *A mon Esprit*, in which he sets forth the problem of the satire:

Elle seule, bravant l'orgueil et l'injustice,
Va jusque sous le dais faire pâlir le vice.²

¹ The most divine author, if he uses not the correct expression,
In spite of all his efforts will never be but a poor writer.

² It (satire) alone, defying pride and injustice,
Penetrates even into the palace to put vice to shame.

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After this work, Boileau, who had been appointed historiographer of the king along with Racine, followed Racine's example by interrupting his poetic labors; during the ensuing sixteen years he was content with publishing the last two cantos of the *Lutrin*. He again took up his literary work in 1693; but, less fortunate than his famous friend, he was far from disclosing a new genius. Here begins the third period of his life—that in which he produced the *Ode sur la prise de Namur*, the satires against *Les Femmes*, on *L'Honneur*, and the one against *L'Équivoque*. Boileau never replied directly to any pamphlet attacking him, but when in 1687, the famous Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns was agitating the literary world, Boileau took a very active part in defense of the ancients. It is said that during a meeting of the Académie Française, when Charles Perrault¹ read his poem *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand*, in which he freely abused the authors of antiquity, Boileau, angered and offended, showed his chagrin, and made use of his most effective weapon—satire. He wrote in a letter to the Marquis de Mimeure that his vexation so apparent on this occasion must have served Molière as a model for his *Misanthrope*. When Perrault published his *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, the Prince de Conti said: "If Boileau does not answer, you can assure him that I shall go to the Academy to write on his seat: 'Thou sleepest, Brutus.'" The ode on the capture of Namur—designed to overturn Perrault's celebration of the moderns—not sufficing, Boileau wrote his *Réflexions sur Longin*.

The works of Boileau are the best expression of the literary criticism of the seventeenth century; although during the entire century literary discussions were the fashion. In the salons, the sonnets of Benserade, and Voiture were discussed; in the Academy, *Le Cid*. Debates were in vogue in all the

¹ A man of wit, author of the charming *Fairy Tales*, reminiscent of our *Mother Goose Stories*. It is Perrault who read before the Academy a discourse containing these lines:

"Que l'on peut comparer, sans crainte d'être injuste,
Le siècle de Louis au beau siècle d'Auguste."

Louis XIV is said to have imitated the customs of the age of Augustus with respect to his court poets. Louis thought himself another Augustus, Boileau was his Horace.

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literary circles; the most celebrated of these debates was called the "Quarrel of the ancients and the moderns," the moderns being represented by Charles Perrault, the ancients by Boileau, Huet, La Fontaine. The dispute ended with the reconciliation of Boileau and Perrault. Boileau in his defense of the ancients, writes Lanson, as little suspected that he was an evolutionist as Saint Augustine thought himself a Cartesian when he encountered the famous formula: *Je pense, donc je suis*. The quarrel was revived fifteen years later, when the ancients carried off the palm of victory with the translation of the *Iliad* by Madame Dacier and of *Télémaque*, by Fénelon.

At court, Boileau retained his independence as elsewhere, and for thirty years enjoyed the uninterrupted favor of the king. Boileau, like Racine and Molière, have been reproached by posterity for flattering the king, but it must be remembered that at this epoch there was in France a royalty cult, and it was only natural to praise the king. Nevertheless, this adulation did not make Boileau stoop to any sordidness; on the contrary he dared even at times to tell an unpleasant truth to the king. Louis XIV having composed some verses, showed them to Boileau. "Sire," said Boileau, "nothing is impossible to Your Majesty. Your Majesty has wished to make bad verses, and Your Majesty has entirely succeeded."

"M. Boileau," Racine wrote to his son, "has not only received from heaven a marvelous genius for satire, but he has likewise an excellent judgment that enables him to distinguish what should be lauded from what should be reproved." But this "marvelous genius for satire" did not affect the natural good-will of Boileau. "He is only cruel in verse," said Madame de Sévigné. Racine was vicious and bitter in discussion; Boileau always retained his sangfroid. His opinions often anticipated those of posterity. One day the king asked him who was the greatest poet of his reign: "Molière, Sire," answered Boileau, without hesitation. "I should not have thought so," answered the king, somewhat astonished, "but you understand it better than I."

Boileau lived the greater part of his life at Auteuil, in a house which he owed to the bounty of Louis XIV, and which was a favorite rendezvous of the great celebrities of the day.

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Twice a week these great men met, and among their favorite places were the famous cabarets,¹ the *Mouton blanc* and the *Pomme de pin*, the taverns Villon and Régnier are supposed to have frequented. Here these men of genius exchanged their brilliant ideas over the flowing cup and gay repasts.

It is related that on one occasion, Molière, Chapelle, Boileau, Racine, and La Fontaine, were assembled at Auteuil. They were dining and drinking, and the wise Boileau lost his wits with the rest of them. Wine had put them in a most serious frame of mind; reflection on the miseries of life, and the maxim of the ancients that the highest happiness is not to have been born at all—or, being denied that, to die young—prompted a heroic resolution to throw themselves forthwith into the river. They set out, and the river was not far. Then Molière persuaded them that such a noble action should not be buried in the shades of night; that it would more properly be done in the light of day. So they stopped, and, looking at each other, said: “He is right”; to which Chapelle added, “Yes, gentlemen, let us not drown ourselves until to-morrow morning, and, meanwhile, let us drink the rest of the wine.” But the following day saw a change in their ideas; they concluded that, after all, it was better to support the miseries of life.

Among those great minds, Boileau constantly remained the bond between rivals. An intimate friend of Racine, he never quarreled with Molière; he ran to the king to ask him to transfer the royal pension, with which Louis had honored him, to the aged Corneille, who found himself deprived, without reason, of the monarch’s favor. Boileau entered the Academy in 1684, immediately after La Fontaine; his satires had retarded his election. “He praised without flattery, he humbled himself nobly,” says Louis Racine, “and when declaring that membership in the Academy should be closed to him for many reasons, he alluded to all the Academicians whom he had satirized in his works.”

Boileau survived Racine by twelve years, without setting foot in the court subsequent to his first interview with the king after Racine’s death. “I have been at Versailles,” he writes,

¹ These cabarets were later called cafés.

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“where I have seen Madame de Maintenon, and afterward the king, who overwhelmed me with kind expressions; so, here I am, more the historiographer than ever. His Majesty spoke to me of M. Racine in a way to make all the courtiers anxious to die, if they thought he would speak of them in this way after their death. However, this consoled me very little for the loss of our illustrious friend, who is none the less dead, although mourned by the greatest king in the universe.” “Remember,” Louis XIV had said, “that I have always one hour a week to give you when you wish to come.” However, Boileau did not return. “What should I do at the court?” he used to say. “I no longer know how to praise.” He lived in retirement on his estate at Auteuil until his death. Boileau died in 1711, having survived all his friends, leaving almost all his estate to the poor, and followed to his tomb by a numerous crowd. “He had many friends,” said the people, “yet they assure us that he spoke ill of everybody.”

No writer has contributed more to the formation of poetry than has Boileau; no juster and more delicate judgment has appreciated the merit of authors; no more elevated soul has directed a firmer and saner mind. In spite of the vicissitudes of letters, in spite of the sometimes excessive rigor of his decisions, Boileau has left on the French language an ineffaceable imprint. His talent has exercised less influence than his mind; his judgment and his character have had more influence than his verses.

There are few writers who have been so widely read as Boileau.¹ He exercised an influence throughout Europe, and acted upon the works of Pope, Dryden, Gottsched, Lessing, Luzan, and others. Boileau's dictum was adopted as the highest standard of French taste. Lanson writes: “Experience seems to indicate that the principles of Boileau in their essential and profound signification embody the fundamental and permanent demands of French taste. For two centuries all that has been found solid, sane, and durable in our literature, all that has been saved from oblivion and the decay of time, is the diction essentially conforming to the doctrine of the *Art poétique*: and the concealed faults or obvious

¹ There are two hundred and twenty-five editions of his works of which sixty editions were published during his lifetime.

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deformities which caused the destruction of schools and their works, were generally what Boileau implicitly or expressly condemned. . . . A psychological and moral literature, clear, precise, regular, and interesting, based on reality and yet resting the mind from reality, the joy of the *esprits légers*, and the food of active intellect—that is what French taste demands. Because of this, therefore, for many years to come we shall have something of Boileau, and something essential, in all the works which will succeed among us.”

MOLIÈRE

Tragedy had held the stage early in the seventeenth century in France. Not until Molière rang up the curtain on true comedy did the sock take the place of the buskin. Farces had been introduced by Gros Guillaume and Gautier-Garguille; Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin had written a comedy sketch of manners, *Les Visionnaires* (The Visionaries); and Corneille's *Le Menteur*, the first notable attempt at a comedy of character, had appeared. But the complications of plot in these plays were almost incomprehensible! and Scarron's *Le Marquis ridicule*, and *Don Japhet d'Arménie* abounded in mystification, and buffoonery. With Molière's advent these clumsy and superficial essays gave way to refreshing, natural pictures of life; and that, too, at a time when life was stifled by affectation and artificiality of speech and manner. Mediocre poets could not effect this change; only a genius could show the way and find the means to correct and improve society—in fact, to rescue it. Molière, creator of modern comedy, unfettered by rules, rose to heights never before and never since attained. Comedy as it had been developed in the Greek and Roman world, and continued in the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*, found in him a master who overturned the traditions of comic complications—depicting instead the weaknesses of his age and of humanity as we still see it to-day. Of all Frenchmen, Molière remains the author who enjoys universal homage, whose place in the world's literature is above all other contrivers of comedy, ancient and modern.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, who later took the pseudonym of

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"Molière," was born at Paris in 1622. His father, chamberlain of the king, sent him to be educated at the "Collège de Clermont" (later Louis-le-Grand), at that time conducted by the Jesuits. But he was preferably in attendance at the lessons which the philosopher Gassendi gave to his disciples, among whom were the celebrated traveler Bernier, the poet Hénault, the humorist Cyrano de Bergerac, and Chapelle the Epicurean. During the course of these lessons, Poquelin acquired a certain liberty of thought which often appeared in his plays, and, later, lent color to the accusation that he was irreligious. After his studies were finished, Molière, at the age of twenty, played in the gambling house of la Perle, and then organized a company under the ambitious name of L'Illustre Théâtre in 1643, where he acted under the name of Molière. The next year the company was stranded, Molière was arrested by the tradesman who supplied the candles, and the company had to borrow money to release him from prison. In 1646 he left Paris as the chief of a small troop of actors, who, not being able to support themselves in Paris, traveled twelve years through the provinces. In 1653, at Lyons, he staged his comedy *L'Étourdi*,¹ the first regular play he had ever composed; *Le Dépit Amoureux*² was presented at Béziers³ in 1656, where he was the protégé of Prince de Conti, governor of Languedoc. The company returned to Paris in 1658, and Molière played before the king in the hall of the Guards of the old Louvre. Under the patronage of the king and of Monsieur, the king's brother, Molière became the chief of a troop called the "Troupe de Monsieur" which played in the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon. Later they played in the Palais-Royal under the protection of the king and were called "troupe du roy" in opposition to the "troupe royale" of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and of the Théâtre du Marais. Some years later, Molière's company absorbed the Marais company to form the Théâtre Guénégaud. In 1680, by order of Louis

¹ *L'Étourdi* is imitated from the *l'Inavvertito* of Nicolo Barbieri.

² *Le Dépit Amoureux* is derived from *l'Interesse*, by Nicolas Secchi, and from the farce, *Gli Sdegni amorosi*.

³ For the opening of the session of the Estates of Languedoc. Local tradition still shows the chair in the barber's shop where Molière sat in silence and studied from life the various characters who assembled there.

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XIV, who wished to have only one French theatre in Paris, Molière's company was united with the "Troupe royale de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne," forming the famous Comédie Française (official name of the Théâtre-Français) in a wing of the Palais-Royal. So Molière may be considered the true founder of the Théâtre-Français. It was dedicated to a classic repertory and to this day is considered the foremost stage for classic plays and their perfect interpretation. It was at the Théâtre du Petit-Bourbon that Molière in 1659 achieved such a signal victory with his *Précieuses Ridicules*. He broke away from the Italians and Spanish, and, taking the customs of his time at first hand, squarely attacked the affectations and absurd pretensions of the vulgar imitators of the Hôtel Rambouillet. "Courage, Molière!" cried an old man from the midst of the pit. "That is true comedy!" When he published his play Molière, lest he offend a powerful class, took pains to say in the preface, that he was not attacking the real *Précieuses*, but those who imitated them poorly. *Ménage*, one of the most illustrious *alcôvistes*,¹ declared himself converted. "Monsieur," said he to Chapelain, while coming from the opening performance of the *Précieuses*, "we used to approve of all the nonsense which has just been so cleverly criticised with so much good sense, and, as Saint Remi said to Clovis: 'We shall have to burn what we have worshiped, and worship what we have burned.'" ² "It happened, as I had predicted," added *Ménage*. After that first performance they abandoned the nonsensical and forced style which had been cultivated, and applauded Molière with enthusiasm.

Then Molière took another step. "Henceforth," said he, "I shall study Plautus and Terence, and reveal the fragments of Meander." Like his illustrious contemporaries, he proceeded to borrow from the classics; he assimilated what he borrowed, and impressed it with his own originality. From Plautus he took *L'Avare* and *Amphitryon*; from Terence, the knaveries of his valets and the debates of his *Adelphi* concerning marriage. In Italy he sought his scholar — academi-

¹ An *alcôviste* was an habitué of ruelles and also meant a cicisbeo or professed gallant and attendant of a married woman.

² The entire quotation reads. "Courbe la tête, fier Sicambre, adore ce que tu as brûlé, brûle ce que tu as adoré."

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cian of Bologna or Padua — whose education he completed in the school of the French Vadius or Pancraces; Pantalon, an amorous and credulous old man, was transformed into Gerontes, and Scapin, wily and knavish, naturally followed his master. Moreto inspired *La Princesse d'Élide*; Tirso de Molin's *Le Convive de Pierre* (The Stone Guest), became *Le Festin de Pierre*, usually known as *Don Juan*. It was as Molière himself said: "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve."¹ But it did not in the least detract from his glory; like Shakespeare, he did not copy, he transformed, by virtue of his genius.

L'École des Maris (The School for Husbands) and *Les Fâcheux* (The Bores) were performed for the fêtes at Vaux. Among the ridiculous characters of this last-named play, Molière had not included that of the hunter. Louis XIV himself pointed out to him his omission. "There is one whom you have forgotten, the Marquis de Soyecour," said he. Twenty-four hours later the tiresome gamekeeper, with all his hunting jargon, forever found a place among the *Fâcheux*² of Molière. With *L'École des femmes*,³ *La Critique de l'École des Femmes*, and *l'Impromptu de Versailles*, began the fighting period of the great comic poet's life. Accused of irreligion, attacked even in his private life, Molière, repaying insult with insult, exposed the idiosyncrasies of his enemies to the ridicule of the court and of posterity. *Don Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre*, was designed to clear the author of the reproach of impiety; *La Princesse d'Élide* and *L'Amour médecin* were

¹ "I take my own wherever I find it."

Pascal said: "Let no one say that I have said nothing new. The arrangement of the material is new."

La Bruyère said: "Everything has been said" and yet he wrote an excellent and an original book.

² *Les Fâcheux* is the first example of those pieces called "*pièces à tiroir*" — plays without plan or plot; and in it was introduced, for the first time, the comedy-ballet, in which the dance is so intermingled with the action as to fill up intervals, without breaking the continuity of the play. *Les Fâcheux* was conceived, written, rehearsed and performed within fifteen days.

³ Sir Walter Scott says: "*The Country Wife* of Wycherly is an imitation of *L'École des femmes*, with the demerit on the part of the English author of having rendered licentious a plot which in Molière's hands is only gay."

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only charming interludes in the great struggle henceforth waged between realities and appearances.

In 1666, Molière produced *Le Misanthrope*, an invective against the superficiality and the perfidies of the court. *Le Tartuffe* was a new effort in the same direction, bolder in its attack on religious hypocrisy, and seeming to strike even at religion itself. Molière had been working on it for a long time. The first acts had been played at court under the title *L'Hypocrite*; the completed play was performed under the title of *L'Imposteur*, during the absence of the King. The next day its representation was forbidden: "His Honor, the first President Lamoignon did not wish it to be played."¹

The good sense and judgment of the king finally prevailed over the terrors of the true devotees and the anger of the hypocrites. His Majesty had just seen the performance of an impious buffoonery, when he said to the Prince of Condé, who was protecting Molière: "I should like to know why people who are so scandalized at Molière's comedy say nothing of that of Scaramouche."² "The reason for that," responded the prince, "is that the comedy of Scaramouche deals with heaven and religion, for which these gentlemen care nothing, whereas Molière's comedy reflects themselves — a thing which they cannot endure." The following fragments of a petition presented to the king by Molière, on the comedy of *Tartuffe*, illustrates some of the difficulties he had to contend with:

SIRE:

The duty of comedy being to correct men while diverting them, I have thought that in the profession I pursue I could do nothing better than attack by means of ridiculous descriptions the vices of my epoch; and since hypocrisy, without doubt, is one of the most prevalent of these, one of the most troublesome and dangerous, I had thought, Sire, that I should render no small service to all honest

¹ The play upon words is lost by translation. Molière said: "Monsieur le premier président ne veut pas qu'on le joue," *le* referring to *Tartuffe*, but which may also be applied to Lamoignon.

² Scaramouche, a personage of the ancient Italian stage always dressed in black from head to foot. Tiberio Fiorelli was the first comedian known by that name, and is said to have invented it. Molière uses it in his phrase "Le ciel s'est habillé, ce soir, en Scaramouche."

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people in your kingdom if I made a comedy describing hypocrites and exposing to view, as they ought to be, all the studied deceits of these extremely "good" people, all the hidden tricks of these counterfeiters in devotion, who wish to ensnare men by means of false zeal and a sophistical charity. . . . But, in spite of this glorious declaration of the greatest king on earth as well as the most enlightened; in spite, moreover, of the approbation of the Papal legate and the greater part of our prelates—all of whom, in the readings of my work which I have given them, found themselves in accord with the sentiments of your Majesty; in spite of all this, I say, we see a book composed by the curé¹ of — which boldly gives the lie to all this august testimony. Your Majesty need say nothing, and the legate and the prelates need not render their judgment; my comedy, without his having seen it, is diabolical, and diabolical is my brain; I am a demon clothed in flesh in the form of a man—a libertine, an impious wretch worthy of exemplary punishment. It does not suffice that a public fire expiate my offense; I should settle too cheaply. The charitable zeal of this good man does not stop at this: he does not wish that I should have mercy from God, he wishes that I be damned; it is all settled. . . .

While waiting permission to stage *Tartuffe*, Molière had produced *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, *Amphitryon*, *George Dandin* and *L'Avare*,² lavishing freely the inexhaustible resources of his genius, and always ready for the royal or princely fêtes. Molière was the comedian, the director and manager of his company, and also furnished the plays, most of which were improvised on command for the court. *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* was played for the first time at Chambord; "one year later," *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* appeared, with the divertissements and music of Lulli. The play directly satirized one of the most frequently ridiculous characteristics of his time. Many of the people secretly felt themselves pricked; their anger broke out at the first representation, and Molière thought himself ruined; but the king said to him:

¹ The curé of Saint-Barthélemy, Pierre Roullé, who made a most violent attack on Molière and called him "that demon clad in human flesh, who deserved to be sent through earthly, to eternal, fires," in a pamphlet (*Le Roy glorieux au monde*). In answer, the king adopted Molière's company as his servants and gave them the title of *Troupe du roy*.

² After Plautus, and the play Goethe considered among the finest ever written.

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"You have never done anything which has diverted me so much; your comedy is excellent." So the court immediately hastened to admire it.

The king had lavished his favors on Molière, who was stationed near him as chamberlain by heredity.¹ He had given him a pension of seven thousand livres and the privileges of the royal theater. He protected him against the slanders of certain of his private servitors and gave him a public proof of his esteem, by being the godfather of the oldest of his children, whose godmother was the Duchess of Orleans. Hearing that some of the officers of his court had treated Molière in a contemptuous manner, the king bade him be a guest at his private table, where he himself served the actor-dramatist, saying to his astonished courtiers: "You see me occupied in serving Molière, who is not good enough company for some of my officers." But all the power of the monarch, and his constant favors, could not efface the public prejudice which was then attached to the actor's profession, and confer upon the comedian, seen every day on the stage, the station and rank to which his genius entitled him. The friends of Molière urged him to quit the theater. "Your health is declining," Boileau said to him, "because the profession of a comedian is exhausting you. Why do you not give it up?" "Alas!" answered Molière, sighing, "it is a point of honor which holds me." "And what do you mean by that?" asked Boileau. "The point of honor," explained Molière, "consists in my not deserting more than a hundred persons whose support depends upon my personal exertions."

In ordinary life Molière laughed little, and observed a great deal; his friends had nicknamed him "the Contemplator." Constantly wounded in his affections and his pride, Molière was unhappy and sad. Ill-mated with a wife of whom he was justly jealous, whom he passionately loved, and unable to find at home consolation for the vexations and troubles of his life, he sought in work and incessant activity,

¹ According to the custom in France in 1669, the *valets de chambre-tapissiers* made the king's bed every day, together with the regular valets. They were obliged to take care of the campaign furnishings, and to arrange his Majesty's furniture.

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the only relief which a proud spirit could enjoy. *Psyché*, *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (The Impostures of Scapin), and *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* produced in 1671,¹ disclosed neither the sadness nor the increasing suffering of their author. *Les Femmes Savantes* at first had little success; it was pronounced cold. The marvelous fineness of portraiture, the accuracy of judgment, the delicacy and elegance of the dialogue, were not relished until later. When Molière wrote *Le Malade Imaginaire* — the last of the repeated blows which he had aimed at physicians — he was in worse health than usual; his friends, his actors, urged him not to play. "What do you want me to do?" he asked. "There are fifty poor workmen who have only their day's wages on which to live; what will they do if we do not play? I should reproach myself for having neglected to give them bread, if only for a single day."

Molière was, his contemporaries say, a comedian from head to foot. "It seemed as if he had several voices; everything spoke with him, and by a step, by a smile, by a wink of the eye and a movement of the hand, he could make more things understood than the greatest talker could express in an hour." During the fourth performance of *Le Malade Imaginaire*, on the seventeenth of February, 1693, Molière's health, undermined by unhappiness and overwork gave way. He had a hemorrhage which a few hours later ended his life, at fifty-one years of age. According to the ridiculous customs of the time he, as an actor, was denied Christian burial.

In the preface to the edition of Molière of 1682 — attributed by some to Marcel, by others to La Grange and Vinot — is found the following: "Everyone regretted a man so rare, and still regrets him every day, but particularly the persons who have good taste and delicacy. He was named the Terence² of his century; this one word includes all the praises which might be bestowed on him." La Fontaine expressed his sorrow and regret at the death of Molière, in this touching epitaph:

¹ The same year the first French opera *Pomone* was produced. The Academy of Music had been founded in 1669.

² A celebrated Roman comic poet who lived in the second century before Christ.

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Sous ce tombeau gisent Plaute¹ et Térence.
Et cependant le seul Molière y git:
Leurs trois talents ne formaient qu'un esprit,
Dont le bel art réjouissait la France.
Ils sont partis, et j'ai peu d'espérance
De les revoir malgré tous nos efforts;
Pour un long temps selon toute apparence,
Térence, Plaute et Molière sont morts.²

The great glory of Molière is to have been the poet of humanity, and at the same time the poet of his own epoch. Not only was he the first to perceive and chastise the ridiculous elements in things which his contemporaries esteemed and took seriously, but he has incarnated men's vices and whims in creations which have an imperishable verity. His characters have a physiognomy so distinct, so personal, that they may be recognized among a thousand; we think that their epoch lived with them, yet each century finds in them its own leanings and vices; they are at once real as individuals and eternally true as types. They are not creatures of fantasy, but of real life, with warm blood pulsing through their veins, and his characters, with their human frailties and their eternal veracity have raised Molière to one of the greatest poets of all time. The plot which sweeps his actors along, and envelops them like an atmosphere, is resplendent with the fire of his imagination. It is a warmth of gayety which warms us, which impassions all this comic world, and scintillates from all the objects in it, "like the light of a southern sky, in a thousand brilliant effects." This burst of joyous humor, this sweep of imagination, increases in Molière along with the severe gift of philosophic observation. In proportion as his reason becomes more profound and his insight more penetrating, his comic power increases and burns. It is, so to speak, the lyricism of irony and sarcastic gayety, linked with pure sportiveness and sparkling laughter. In a clear, pre-

¹ A Roman dramatist (second century B.C.).

² Under this tomb rest Plautus and Terence—yet only Molière rests here: their three talents formed but one mind, whose fine art delighted France. They are gone, and I have little hope of seeing them again, in spite of all our efforts; for a long time, according to all appearances, Terence, Plautus, and Molière are dead.

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cise and natural manner he speaks the language of the cities, of the provinces, of all classes and of all passions. *Le Malade Imaginaire* is its last expression and most striking example. In this play Molière approaches the ideal of free and unrestrained imagination, which made the charm and poetry of the ancient Greek comedy.

Saintsbury says: "Of all dramatists, ancient and modern, Molière is perhaps that one who has borne most constantly in mind the theory that the stage is a lay pulpit, and that its end is not merely amusement, but the reformation of manners by means of amusing spectacles. . . . Brunetière says: "One may almost say that, during two centuries, a comedy was criticised with Molière as a basis; in other words, that during this time he was the standard for Europe."

To the accusation made against him by some pedantic critics, who objected to his plays because they were not made strictly to conform to rules, Molière answered with a convincing argument: "Je voudrais bien savoir si la grande règle de toutes les règles n'est pas de plaire."¹ And all the world who loves true comedy says of him with La Fontaine: "Voilà mon Homme!"

Molière was not a member of the Academy; his vocation had closed its doors to him. It was almost a hundred years after his death, in 1778, that a bust of him was erected beneath which were carved these words: "Rien ne manque à sa gloire, il manquait à la nôtre."²

The three masterpieces of Molière are *Le Misanthrope*, *Le Tartuffe*,³ and *Les Femmes Savantes*.

LE MISANTHROPE

Alceste is one of the most loyal of men. He lacks only one virtue—indulgence to the frailties of mankind. His peevish wisdom pardons no form of human weakness. He is ready to denounce as a lie, as treason, the most harmless expression that implies a concession to the customs of the world.

¹ "I should really like to know if the great rule of all rules is not that of pleasing."

² "His glory lacks nothing; he was lacking to ours."

³ Molière himself wrote it *Tartuffe*; the French Academy changed the spelling to *Tartufe*.

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To the bad humor of Alceste, Molière opposes the optimistic character of Philinte. Alceste falls in love with a coquette; faithful Eliante would much better deserve his love, but he loves Célimène in spite of himself. The indignation of Alceste is often justified by the vices of that society in the midst of which he lives: the hypocrisy and sweetish spitefulness of the prude, Arsinoé; the fatuity of marquises; the vanity of the court poet, and especially the perfidious coquetry of Célimène, are offenses that wound profoundly a man of intelligence and noble character. Nor is Alceste ridiculous except at certain moments, when the violence of his passions contrasts too strongly with the causes which provoke them. Whether Philinte has praised bad verses, or whether corrupt judges have rendered an unfair decision, the *misanthrope* makes no distinction; he bursts out, he becomes indignant, he declares himself resolved to flee from society, to withdraw from this wicked life — forgetting that there would be little merit in loving men if they were perfect, and that the rarest and most difficult virtue, charity, consists precisely in loving them in spite of their faults.

Molière was loudly censured as having ridiculed in the person of Alceste, the Duke de Montausier, a man of honor and virtue, but of blunt, discourteous manners. The duke, informed that he had been put on the stage by Molière, threatened vengeance; but being persuaded to see the play, he sought the author instantly, embraced him repeatedly, and assured him that if he (Molière) had really thought of him when composing the *Misanthrope*, he regarded it as an honor which he could never forget. It is of Montausier that Boileau had said, in his satire to Valaincour: "The smile on his face is in bad humor."

Le Misanthrope pictures the suffering in the heart of a man who loves, and sees himself deceived without his own sentiments becoming extinguished (the suffering of Molière himself). The *Misanthrope* is the most correct work of Molière, and a great number of its verses have become proverbial. For example:

L'ami du genre humain n'est point du tout mon fait.¹

¹ To be a friend of the human race does not at all suit me.

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Ces haines vigoureuses
Que doit donner le vice aux âmes vertueuses.¹

Un endroit écarté
Où d'être homme d'honneur on ait la liberté.²

TARTUFFE

A rich and pious bourgeois, Orgon, has been imprudent enough to receive in his home a man whose apparent devoutness has deceived him. His mother, Madame Pernelle, is, like him, the dupe of this sacrilegious and deceitful humbug. In vain have his brother-in-law, his son, and specially his servant, the frank and sprightly Dorine, discovered the rascal beneath the mask of holiness. Orgon first opens his eyes at the moment when he has personal proofs of the knavery of his protégé — at the moment when his entire estate, when his very house, belong to the scoundrel who expels him from it; when his honor, his liberty, and perhaps his life, are in imminent danger. A verse often quoted reads:

On n'y respecte rien, chacun y parle haut,
Et c'est tout justement la cour du roi Pétaud.³

LES FEMMES SAVANTES

Les Femmes savantes is, so to speak, the continuation of *Les Précieuses ridicules*. One of the finest and best poised pieces of Molière, it succeeded completely at the court and in the world of letters, but did not receive from the public the welcome which it deserved. What Molière attacks here again is not so much science as pedantry. The unwholesome air of pedantry and the "higher life" has infected the home of a simple and good bourgeois, Chrysale. His wife Philaminte,

¹ The vigorous hatred that vice should arouse in virtuous souls.

² A sequestered spot where one is free to be a gentleman of honor.

³ This phrase from *Tartuffe* has become proverbial as meaning "when everybody wishes to speak at once." At one time in France, beggars named a chief whom they facetiously called "King Pétaud" (from the Latin, *peto*, "I demand"). He had no authority whatever over his subjects.

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his sister Bélise, and Armande, his oldest daughter, converse all day with pedants of poor tone, whom they consider sublime geniuses. To look after the cares of the household is beneath them. They are entirely given up to pretentious babbling, to literary and philosophic divagations; they quote Descartes, Epicurus, Plato; they seek animals in the moon, and weigh the verses of M. Trissotin, an aspirant to the dowry of Henriette, the second daughter of Chrysale, who has been able to escape the contagion of maternal folly. She is one of the most sympathetic creations of Molière. With the consent of her father, she has promised her hand to a good man, Clitandre, a declared enemy of false knowledge and pedantry. Henriette has not concealed from Trissotin the fact that she has only repugnance for his person, and that her heart is with Clitandre; but he does not pride himself on delicacy, and will not renounce for such a light rebuff the fine dower which he covets. Ariste, brother of Chrysale, and the thinker of the comedy, intervenes very opportunely. At the moment when they are about to sign the marriage contract, he brings the news that Chrysale is ruined. Trissotin perceives, a little late, that it is not at all consistent with his dignity to accept a heart which does not yield itself; and he retires. Ariste has brought only false news; the disasters of which he spoke are of his own invention. It is a stratagem which he has employed, in order to undeceive Philaminte and oblige Trissotin to show the depths of his soul. Philaminte is constrained to yield, and Clitandre will marry Henriette.

L'AVARE ¹

Harpagon loves nothing in the world but himself and his ducats. Solely occupied in guarding and increasing his estate, he sees in his children only enemies and domestic spies. In return, his daughter Élise, and his son Cléante, have neither feelings of tenderness nor respect for him. Left to themselves, without guide and counsel, they are guilty of the most blameworthy actions. Élise authorizes the man whom she loves

¹ *L'Avare*, which in Germany is the most popular of Molière's plays, is founded on *Aulularia*, a comedy by Plautus.

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to come to the paternal house in disguise, and Cléante ruins himself in advance by loans from usurers. Harpagon takes it into his head to marry them. About their inclinations and their tastes he cares little: for his son he has chosen a widow; he destines his "daughter for Monsieur Anselme," a prudent and wise man "not more than fifty years of age"; he himself wishes to marry a young girl of poor parents, whose beauty has charmed him. He discovers that his son is in love with this young girl, yet it makes little difference to him. But an accident affecting that which he holds most dear makes him for a moment forget his fine projects. His treasure, a cash box containing ten thousand crowns, has disappeared. He wishes to have the people of the city and suburbs arrested *en masse*. It turns out that his domestic, Valère, the disguised lover of Élise, has stolen the precious cash box, and he restores it to Harpagon only on condition that he will marry his daughter and son according to their own wishes. It is found that Valère is the son of Monsieur Anselme, and the brother of that Marianne who is sought in marriage by Harpagon and his son. This discovery ends their difficulties: Valère is to marry Élise, and Cléante will wed Marianne. Harpagon, to whom the cash box has been returned, consents, provided that he be put to no expense whatsoever, and a new coat be made for him for the wedding.

"*George Dandin*" is concerned with a rich peasant, who has married a young lady of noble family, in spite of the counsel of his reason, and finds cause to repent, having strayed into this rôle of a ridiculous rustic gentleman. "Tu l'as voulu, George Dandin,"¹ has become a well recognized quotation.

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme is the eternal image of the parvenu—of the ridiculous figure cut by a good man when trying to imitate the manners of a caste which is not his own.

L'Amour Médecin—the play which, as Molière tells us in his Preface, was "proposed, written, learned, and presented in five days"—is the true point of departure of the attacks against the Faculty (of Medicine). He had already aimed several attacks against physicians in *Don Juan*, but this time

¹ "You would have it so, George Dandin."

he attacked them face to face, and began a campaign which he continued in several plays.

Sir Walter Scott says: "The medical faculty at Paris in the middle of the seventeenth century was at a very low ebb. Almost every physician was attached to some particular form of treatment, which, exercised on his patients without distinction, probably killed in as many instances as it effected a cure. Their exterior — designed, doubtless, to inspire respect by its peculiar garb and formal manner — was in itself matter for ridicule. They ambled on mules through the city of Paris attired in antique and grotesque dress, the jest of its laughter-loving people, and the dread of those who were unfortunate enough to be their patients. The consultations of these sages were conducted in a barbarous Latinity; or, if they condescended to use the popular language, they disfigured it with an unnecessary profusion of technical terms, or rendered it unintelligible by a prodigal tissue of scholastic formalities of expression. The venerable dullness and pedantic ignorance of the faculty was incensed at the ridicule cast upon it in *L'Amour Médecin*, especially as four of its most distinguished members were introduced under Greek names, invented by Boileau for his friend's use. The consultation held by these sages, which respects everything save the case of a patient; the ceremonious difficulty with which they are at first brought to deliver their opinions; the vivacity and fury with which each finally defends his own, predicting the instant death of the patient if another treatment be followed — all this seemed to the public highly comical, and led many reflecting men to think that Lisette was not far wrong in contending that a sick man should not be said to die of a fever or consumption, but of four doctors and two apothecaries. The farce enlarged the sphere of Molière's enemies; but as the poet suffered none of the faculty¹ to prescribe for him, their resentment was of the less consequence."

¹ Molière asked a favor of the king for the son of a physician. "What, Molière," exclaimed the monarch, "you, have a doctor! What does he do?" "Sire," said Molière, "we argue, he prescribes remedies for me; I take none, and get well."

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LA FONTAINE

Jean de La Fontaine, born in 1621 at Château-Thierry, died in 1695. After an indifferent education he entered the Oratory¹ at Reims, at the age of twenty, to study theology, but soon left it, not having an ecclesiastical vocation. He came and went from city to city, amusing himself everywhere, leading a nonchalant life.

Pour moi le monde entier était plein de délices,
J'étais touché des fleurs, des doux sons, des beaux jours,
Mes amis me cherchaient et parfois mes amours.²

Of a careless, flighty and impressionable disposition, he was altogether a creature of circumstance. Just as he had been influenced by the reading of a few books to study for the priesthood, so an ode of Malherbe's made him a poet at twenty-five years of age. In order to check the insouciant life La Fontaine was leading, his father arranged a marriage for him with Marie Héricart, and gave him a position as *maître des eaux-et-forêts* in 1647. But he neglected alike his position and his wife, whom he left alone at Château-Thierry, spending most of his time in Paris, which gay capital he finally made his home. Here he was welcomed and loved by the great world, the princes of Condé and Conti, the Dukes of Bourgogne and Vendôme. Fouquet gave him a pension, and later, when this minister was disgraced and in danger of losing his life, La Fontaine pleaded for royal clemency in his poem *Élégie aux Nymphes de Vaux*:

Du magnanime Henri qu'il contemple la vie;
Dès qu'il se put venger, il en perdit l'envie,
Inspirez à Louis cette même douceur.³

¹ A Brotherhood founded by Philippe of Neri, in Italy, for the education of youths and the training of preachers, and brought into France in 1611 by Cardinal de Bérulle.

² For me the whole world was full of pleasure: I was moved by the flowers, by sweet sounds, by the beautiful days; I was sought by my friends, and sometimes by my loves.

³ May the life of the magnanimous Henry—who, as soon as he could avenge, lost all desire to—inspire Louis with this same gentleness.

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Henrietta of England, Duchess of Orleans, attached La Fontaine to herself as gentleman servant; the Duchess of Bouillon kept him at her home in the country; he lived for twenty years at the home of Madame de la Sablière, beautiful and witty, who received many of the fashionables, and, seeing herself ruined, reorganized her home, but kept, as she said to her friends, "her dog, her cat, and La Fontaine."

When she died, M. and Madame d'Hervart received the poet, already old and quite isolated, in their home and cared for him the remainder of his life. When d'Hervart was on his way to make the proposal to La Fontaine, he met him in the street. "I was coming to ask you to stay with us," he said. "I was going there," answered La Fontaine with the most touching confidence. He remained until his death, content to go occasionally to Château-Thierry, as long as his wife lived, in order to sell, with her consent, some tract of land. His friends had tried to reconcile him to her, and, with this object, had sent him to Château-Thierry; he returned without having seen her. "I did not find my wife," said he; "she was at evening prayers." His absence of mind was sometimes incredible, and his artlessness was often a source of great merriment at the famous reunions of Auteuil. He was nicknamed "*le bonhomme*," which led Molière to remark: "Let us not make fun of '*le bonhomme*,' he will perhaps outlive us." Louis XIV permitted La Fontaine to present to him in person, his published *Fables*. La Fontaine went to Versailles for the purpose, and made a very good presentation speech, but forgot to bring the *Fables*. Nevertheless, the king received him graciously, and gave him a purse filled with gold. La Fontaine promptly mislaid the purse, which was found later among the cushions of the carriage. He was expected one day at a friend's house to dinner: "I come from the burial of an ant," he said, on arriving late. "I followed the convoy to the cemetery, and returned with the family to their own home."

In spite of his absence of mind, his original simplicity of nature and his incapacity in ordinary life, La Fontaine was able to judge the literary merit as well as the moral qualities of his famous friends. When they were together, they spoke of their diversions, of science and literature and of their

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own productions. They gave each other advice when one of them "succumbed to the malady of the period and wrote a book." La Fontaine gave a charming picture of their famous reunions in his novel *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*. The episode in the Golden Ass of Appuleius became, under La Fontaine's pen, a novel of adventure written in an ironical and facetious but graceful style, interspersed with verses. He describes the delightful intimacy enjoyed by these four illustrious friends, whom he names Acanthe (Racine), Ariste (Boileau), Gélaste (Molière), and Polyphile (La Fontaine).

La Fontaine wrote with a great promiscuity all genres of poetry: comedies, verses, ballads, epistles, and epigrams, but his masterworks are his *Fables* in twelve books (1668-1695), and his *Contes et Nouvelles* in five books (1665-1685). He was the *fabuliste inimitable*.¹ Up to his time, the writers of fables had been only philosophers and satirists. La Fontaine rejuvenated the fable. The ancient fable concerned itself only with the meaning of the story and the moral thereof. La Fontaine's superiority lies in the narration itself; the moral is not unduly obtruded—story and lesson are equally considered. The dominant trait of his genius is his universal sympathy and love; he portrayed all ranks, from king to peasant, with warmth of feeling and a happy humor. He discovered the secret and profound charm of nature, animating it with his inexhaustible and gracious genius. He was flexible and naïve at times, elegant, noble and penetrating, beneath a simplicity of form. He himself describes himself:

Je m'avoue, il est vrai, s'il faut parler ainsi,
Papillon du Parnasse et semblable aux abeilles,
A qui le bon Platon compare nos merveilles:
Je suis chose légère et vole à tout sujet,
Je vais de fleur en fleur et d'objet en objet.
A beaucoup de plaisirs je mêle un peu de gloire.²

¹ The word *fabuliste* is La Fontaine's invention, and as late as 1709 was still in use as designating only La Fontaine.

² I confess myself, it is true, if one must so talk, a butterfly of Parnassus, and like the bees to which the good Plato compares our marvels. I am but a light thing, and fly to every subject; I go from flower to flower, and from object to object. With a great many pleasures I mix a little glory.

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An eminent and ingenious writer, M. Taine, has found in the fables of La Fontaine all the classes, all the professions, all the society of the seventeenth century: in the lion, the absolute king; in the fox, the courtier; in the wolf, the warrior; in the bear, the country gentleman; in the ox, the peasant, and so on. However this may be, it is true that La Fontaine immediately finds the precise word which characterizes the rôle of his personages, just as he finds the swift stroke of delineation which makes us see their exterior; the heron, with his long beak fastened like a handle to an equally long neck; the weasel, with the pointed nose; *Triste-Oiseau Le Hibou* (The Moping Owl), *Le Rat Ronge-Maille* (Nibble-Stitch),—and the rest. In his *Fables* he is the poet of all time, of all nations, of all ages of men. The child finds amusement in his works, the adult instruction, and the scholar admires them. They are of equal merit with the most beautiful works of the “grand siècle,” as much by the irreproachable purity of their morality as by the inimitable perfection of their style. The poet took from its source the old apologue of the Orient, magnified through the centuries by the successive inventions of the Greeks, the Romans, and the moderns; he made himself the universal heir of popular common sense; he gathered carefully all these fables, transcribed them, put them in verse, as he says modestly in his preface; and they are no longer the fables of Vishnu-Sarma, of Æsop, of Phædra, of Babrius, of Planude; they are the fables of La Fontaine. Indeed, poetic originality does not consist in inventing the subject, but in discovering the poetry in the subject. The invention of La Fontaine is his manner of narration, his admirable style, that happy imagination which everywhere diffuses interest and life. “He does not compose,” says La Harpe, “he converses. If he tells a story, he is persuaded he has seen!” His erudition, his eloquence, his philosophy—all that is best in him of imagination, memory, sensibility—is made use of to interest you. Hence the phenomenon which had not been seen since the *Odyssey*—that singular but incontestable alliance of the highest poetry with the most naïve description, hence, also, it comes, according to Molière’s expression, that the great minds of France will not efface the *bonhomme* (La Fontaine).

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La Fontaine's *Fables* were published in three collections—the first dedicated to the Dauphin (son of Louis XIV), the rest to Madame de Montespan. They are, as he says, “Une ample comédie en cent actes divers et dont la scène est l'univers.”¹ Sometimes they reach the heights of the epic or lyric, but “come down again with a smile.” At times elegiac and satiric, one also finds in them eloquent discourses and philosophical developments. The Duchesse de Bouillon called him her *fablier*,² saying that he produced fables as a tree produces fruit. Madame de Sévigné describes his *Fables* thus: “C'est un panier de cerises; on veut en choisir les plus belles, et le panier reste vide.”³ His famous fable, *La Cigale et la Fourmi*, is a masterpiece of the modest simplicity of his style. Other fables held in especial esteem are the touching *Odyssey* of *Les deux Pigeons*; *Le Chêne et le Roseau*; *Les Animaux malades de la Peste*; *Le Savetier et le Financier*; *La Laitière et le Pot-au-lait*; *L'Alouette et ses petits, avec le Maître d'un Champ*; *L'Homme et la Couleuvre*—eloquent plea of animals against man; *Le Paysan du Danube*—a protest against war and its consequences; *Le Chat, la Belette et le petit Lapin*; *Le Loup et le Chien*; *Le Pot de terre et le Pot de fer*; *Le Meunier, son Fils, et l'Âne*; *L'Huître et les Plaideurs*; *Philémon et Baucis*.⁴

Of these fables Taine writes: “They are our epics, we have no other. I need not take away this name from the insipid *Henriade*, nor from the artificial and sentimental medley which Chateaubriand entitled *Les Martyrs*. And this epic of La Fontaine is Gallic; always varied, always new. It is

¹ “An ample comedy in one hundred diverse acts of which the scene is the universe.”

² *ier*, the usual French termination of fruit-trees: “pommier, poirier,” etc.

³ “It is a basket of cherries; in choosing the finest the basket is emptied.”

⁴ English titles: *The Locust and the Ant*; *The Two Pigeons*; *The Oak and the Reed*; *The Animals Sick with the Plague*; *The Cobbler and the Banker*; *The Milkmaid and the Milk-can*; *The Lark, its Young, and the Owner of a Field*; *The Man and the Adder*; *The Peasant of the Danube*; *The Cat, the Weasel, and the Little Rabbit*; *The Dog and the Wolf*; *The Earthen Pot and the Iron Pot*; *The Miller, His Son, and the Ass*; *The Oyster and the Litigants*; *Philemon and Baucis*. Ivan Kriloff, the Russian La Fontaine, borrowed thirty-seven of his fables from the French author.

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in touching these instincts, that La Fontaine became so popular. With Rabelais, Voltaire, and Molière, he is our most faithful mirror. Plato, it is said, having learned that the great king wished to know the Athenians, gave the advice to send him the comedies of Aristophanes; if the great king would wish to know us it is the books of La Fontaine which we should send to him."

La Fontaine's *Contes* were written for the Duchesse de Bouillon (1664). They were patterned after the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, and on this account La Fontaine has been accused of immorality. Yet we must remember that these *Contes* were written in the seventeenth century, and dedicated to a worthy woman of high standing. Let us bear in mind, too, what we read in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*: "One of the greatest amusements of our ancestors was reading Boccaccio aloud—an entertainment of which the effects were speedily visible in the literature of our country." La Fontaine himself does not lay much stress on the *Contes* as stories, taking it for granted that everyone knew the subject matter; but with respect to their artistic form, he has said:

Contons, mais contons bien, c'est le point principal;
C'est tout; à cela près, je vous conseille
De dormir comme moi sur l'une et l'autre oreille.¹

However, the *Contes*, as a whole, with their refined licentiousness, are inferior as a picture of manners to the coarser *Fabliaux* which inspired them.

In the *Contes*, La Fontaine—as Balzac did later in his *Contes drôlatiques*—uses with adroitness many ancient phrases. He was the only one of the great writers of the seventeenth century who had any knowledge of the old French literature. Particularly beautiful is the story of *Le Faucon*, wherein a poor knight, having no other gift for his lady love, prepares a dainty morsel for her with his pet falcon.

H. Taine, in his *La Fontaine et ses Fables* writes: "The preachers, the philosophers, the poets formed a chorus to

¹ Let's tell stories, but let's tell them well, that's the main point.
It is the whole thing; as for the rest, I advise you
To sleep as I do, soundly.

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praise the imposing beauty of well-ordered morals and literature, in a solemn anthem accompanied by the ecclesiastical organ. Bossuet leads them and the audience contemplates with awe the august display of violet robes, plumed hats and of spangled gowns, which arrange themselves in beautiful order before the king. In a corner is a good man who yawns or laughs. The sermon bores him, he dislikes ceremonies, considers the rows too regular, the organ too loud. He places on his prie-dieu the book of Saint-Augustine put into his hands by a friend. Furtively he draws from his pocket an edition of Rabelais, makes signs to his neighbors Chaulieu and the Great Prior,¹ and whispers low to them some drollery." His nurse during his last illness voiced the sentiments of all who knew this charming and rare creature and his original simplicity of nature: "God would never have the courage to condemn him."

¹ The Chevalier de Vendôme, *grand prieur de France*.

CHAPTER XVI

LA CHAIRE¹

IN order to make religion understood and observed by the people, sermons were preached in the popular language at an early date. The sermons of the famous orator, Saint-Bernard, Abbot of the Cistercian Monastery of Clairvaux, (1091-1153, canonized 1174), were delivered partly for the people and partly for the instruction of the monks. Of these sermons only three hundred and forty in Latin, addressed to the monks, have been preserved. It was by such orators as Saint-Bernard, Pierre l'Ermite, Foulques de Neuilly and Maurice de Sully that the crusades were inspired. At the same time the foundation and development of the Dominican and Franciscan orders of the twelfth century gave a great impetus to religious eloquence. In the fourteenth century there was a decline in oratory. Nevertheless, we owe to this period the ablest orators, whose works have come down to us—Pierre d'Ailly, de Clémangis and Jean Charlier, better known as Gerson, Chancellor of the University and preacher of the court. In his sixty sermons one finds the defects of his time—the use of secular erudition, the abuse of allegory, and bad taste. Yet his eloquence touches us, for it makes one feel the sufferings and calamities which the orator deploras.

In the fifteenth century, two Franciscan monks, Menot and Olivier Maillard, owe their fame to the boldness of an eloquence that feared not to speak to the people in their own language, replete with rude and trivial imagery.

In the sixteenth century, theological discussions rendered an eminent service to the progress of letters by enriching the common language with an abundance of ideas formerly con-

¹ The pulpit.

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fined to Latin. Calvin especially was an important factor, with his *Institution Chrétienne*.

The seventeenth century, profoundly penetrated by religious influence, produced a group of brilliant pulpit orators. The formulation of new precepts and the reform of the clergy gave renewed impulse to the eloquence of the pulpit, which became a school of psychology. Le Père Bourgoing, le Père Lejeune, le Père Senault, le Père Claude de Lingendes, François de Sales, Saint Vincent de Paul, Du Perron and Mascaron had illuminated Christian doctrine at the beginning of the century, and were the best preachers before Bossuet. It was in the epoch of Louis XIV that the eloquence of the pulpit reached its highest expression: the development of political and judicial eloquence was hardly possible during that reign of absolutism, but the preachers were spurred on to their utmost capacity by the æsthetic tastes of the court. Among these were: Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fénelon, Fléchier, and Massillon.

The preachers of the early part of the century were orators rather than moralists. Bossuet and Bourdaloue were both moralists and orators. They began to preach, Bossuet about 1655, and Bourdaloue some five years later. Although Bossuet was more attached to the teaching of doctrine, both turned their minds to the examination of things interior.

BOSSUET

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, born at Dijon in 1627, belonged to a family of magistrates. He early entered the ecclesiastical state, and from his childhood took delight in the Bible—especially the Old Testament—to such an extent that later what he wrote was sometimes composed almost wholly of Biblical citations and allusions. At sixteen years of age the little abbot, as Tallemant called him, essayed his first sermon at the Hôtel de Rambouillet; at eleven o'clock in the evening, mounted on a tabouret, he improvised a sermon on death before the most imposing assembly of all the great minds of the time, which caused Voiture to remark: “Je n'ai jamais entendu prêcher ni si tôt ni si tard.” (“I have never heard preaching so early or so late.”) Yet, in spite of his

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success, he pursued his studies in retirement. He emerged from it to publish his *Exposition de la Foi Catholique*, one of a series of pamphlets which make up the book *Histoire des variations des églises protestantes* — a very clear, precise work in which he reduced to the essential points the controversy between Catholics and Protestants. He was from that time on considered one of the pillars of the church, and he was all his life struggling against the exaggerations of the Jansenists, who leaned too much to severity; of the Jesuits, who inclined too much toward indulgence; of the Protestants, who accorded too much to reason; and of the Quietists, who deferred too much to sentiment. His *Exposition* is a history of reform from the Catholic point of view, yet sufficiently impartial. His reasoning may be summed up thus: "The Protestant confession of faith has changed often; hence it is false." The reply was that these modifications argued in favor of the Protestants, inasmuch as religion is progressive, and God reveals as men have need of revelation. Bossuet met the Protestants equally in the field of politics.

It was at this time that Louis XIV, desirous that his work should be continued after him, resolved to have the heir to the throne reared under his eyes. To this end he intrusted the prince's education to Bossuet, who was then Bishop of Condom; and the prelate composed for his pupil the books which he needed and which he could not otherwise procure. Such is the origin of the *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*, of the *Traité de la Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-même*, and of the *Politique Tirée de l'Ecriture Sainte*." The *Discours* is a philosophy of history, from the Christian point of view, from the beginning of the world to Charlemagne. The work is divided into three parts. The first is concerned with a rapid exposition of events; the second presents the sequence of religion, and shows that events have disposed themselves marvelously—be it among the Jews, or in the Roman Empire—for the propagation of Christianity. The third part, and the most interesting, considers, from a purely human point of view, the causes of the grandeur and decadence of empires. Thus Bossuet reviews the history of the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, with whom he is more especially concerned. These studies show a great knowledge of history, and the

work as a whole forms a magnificent picture in which the thought may be criticised but not the execution. Montesquieu's *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains* proceeds largely from Bossuet's *Discours*.

The *Connaissance de Dieu* is an elementary treatise of philosophy, outside of theology, in which Bossuet proves the existence of God and the immortality of the soul; by arguments borrowed from Descartes. In the chapters demonstrating the existence of a supreme intelligence by the perfection of its works, there is found an anatomic description of the human body, in which the minute exactitude of detail is equaled only by the clearness of exposition and the happy coloring of the style.

The *Politique* is the theory of absolute government: kings are established by God, and are responsible only to Him. They must do good for their people; but if they stray from this duty, the people are none the less obliged to obey, and they never have the right to remind kings of their duties. This work is composed essentially of passages from the Bible, accompanied by a short commentary. We must admit that Bossuet often forces the text to draw from it his principles. The Protestant Jurien, who answered Bossuet, used the same texts and several others which Bossuet had neglected, to establish the principle of the sovereignty of the people, and of the people's right to demand an account from the king of the use he has made of his power. Louis XIV had had disputes with the Pope as a temporal sovereign;¹ he seized this occasion to have it decided by the clergy just what might be the reciprocal rights of kings and popes. An ecclesiastical assembly was called in 1681. Bossuet presided, and delivered his discourse on the Unity of the Church. The assembly accepted the opinions of the councils of Bâle and Constance, which had declared the general councils superior to popes. It ruled, furthermore, that, in ordinary circumstances, the decisions of the Pope could not be valid except inasmuch as they were approved by all the clergy—an approval which would be established by the absence of all complaint. These rules, which were worked out by Bossuet, constitute what is

¹ The king claimed the right to collect the revenues of the vacant bishoprics; the Pope opposed this claim.

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called the liberties of the Gallican Church. The articles provoked violent attacks from the Pope's adherents, and Bossuet answered in a new work entitled *Défense de la déclaration du clergé de France*. In it he places the spiritual power above the temporal power, and demonstrates that the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope dates only from the fifteenth century.

The last theological struggle of Bossuet, was that which he had to sustain against Fénelon on the subject of Quietism.¹ Fénelon in his *Explication des Maximes des Saints* seemed to approve this doctrine, and was attacked by Bossuet, and censured by the Pope; but Fénelon appeared greater in his defeat than Bossuet in victory. Then *Quietism* disappeared almost entirely.²

Bossuet is not only an illustrious theologian; he is also the greatest religious orator of France. His sermons had made him famous before his books. He did not compose them in advance; he confined himself to outlining the plan and writing a few brilliant passages; then, after having steeped himself in his subject, he mounted the pulpit and abandoned himself to the inspiration of the moment. It is these sketches of sermons that have been recovered; even in this imperfect state they are yet superior to the completed works of many other orators. Among the doctors of the church, Saint Chrysostom was Bossuet's model for eloquence, and Saint Augustine his guide for the study of religion.

But the triumph of Bossuet is the funeral oration. No one has equalled him in this kind of discourse, which displays him in all the pomp of eloquence. Three of these orations especially are placed in the first rank, because of the interest

¹ Quietism is the mystical doctrine which makes Christian perfection consist in love of God and inaction of the soul, without exterior works. Quietism had representatives in all epochs. Its best-known chief was the Spanish priest, Molinos, who, toward the middle of the seventeenth century, published an ascetic book idealizing religion to such a degree that it became incomprehensible to the common people. The celebrated Madame Guyon adopted the ideas of Molinos, and wrote about Quietism. (Larousse.)

² The hard and obdurate character which Bossuet showed to the Protestants, he also made known to his illustrious colleague, Fénelon, in the great quarrel on Quietism.

of the subject and the manner in which the orator has adorned it. In the funeral oration on the Queen of England—daughter of Henry IV, and wife of Charles I, whom the English revolution had sent to the scaffold—Bossuet traces in bold strokes both the progress of the Anglican heresy and the history of the revolution accomplished, and makes an oratorical portrait of Cromwell which has remained famous. The funeral oration on the daughter of this queen, Henriette d'Angleterre, and especially the oration on the Prince de Condé—the great Condé—permitted the orator to make the most brilliant pictures. Condé had figured in the Thirty Years' War, and in the Fronde; Bossuet's recital of the battle of Rocroy, and his comparison of the impetuosity of Condé with the wise deliberation of Turenne, are the salient parts of this work. But a passage truly sublime is the peroration in which the orator calls on all men of all ranks to come and render homage to the illustrious dead; "then, in a trembling voice, returning to himself and indicating his white hair, he bids farewell to his audience, and announces that henceforth he shall consecrate to God alone the remnants of a weakening voice and an ardor which is dying."

The eloquence of Bossuet possessed the quality of boldness and primitive strength. He kept before him one idea—to strike vigorously into the minds of his auditors the religious truths he announced. To attain this end, he found, as if by instinct, the most magnificent parallels, the grandest images; his ardent imagination animated all, and when he showed the nothingness of human things and the pettiness of men before God, he filled the mind with terror.

La Bruyère has eulogized him by calling him a "Father of the Church." His name belongs among the great scholars who have defended dogma, and among the writers who have employed the French language with the greatest force and eloquence. The *Méditations sur l'Évangile*, and the *Élévations sur les Mystères* are still classed with his best productions; but his best-known works are his *Oraisons Funèbres*, and his *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*.

Bossuet, in spite of his immense superiority, was not an orator according to the standards of the seventeenth century. He rises to great heights, but he falls again; he is sublime, but

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uneven. In the time of Louis XIV, men especially loved regularity, measure. Bossuet was the theologian of the epoch, but the orator was Bourdaloue. He died in 1704.

BOURDALOUE

Louis Bourdaloue, born at Bourges in 1632, entered the Society of Jesus at the age of sixteen years. All his life he was occupied with two things only—confession and preaching; it was in the confessional that he gathered the material for his sermons. These were not improvised in part, like Bossuet's; they were scholarly compositions, carefully thought out, written at leisure; and delivered with lowered eyes, to avoid all distraction. Bourdaloue considered his subject in three or four ways, which made the subdivisions of his discourse; then he entered into the points at issue without ever letting himself be turned from his object; an admirable logician, his logic was so powerful, he entwined you, he held, and you could not escape him. Madame de Sévigné, who admired him, has noted the peculiar effect of his eloquence on his audience: "He has often taken my breath by the extreme attention with which one listens to the force and justness of his arguments. I breathed only when he was pleased to end." The Maréchal de Gramont was once so absorbed by the force of the orator's deductions that he exclaimed in the very midst of the sermon, "Zounds, he is right!" Another time, the Prince de Condé, seeing him enter the pulpit of Saint-Sulpice, cried, "Silence, here is the enemy!" Boileau deferred nobly to his great faculties as a moralist when he said, "In satire on women I am only the ape of Bourdaloue."¹

This eloquence of Bourdaloue was of a peculiar nature. it consisted neither in the movement of his discourse, nor in brilliant phrases, nor in great and beautiful images: it arose from his array of proofs, from the clear and facile presentation of ideas. "There is not in Bourdaloue," said Joubert, "either perfect precision or volubility." He pleased es-

¹ After one of Bourdaloue's sermons, Louis XIV said to him: "Father, you ought to be satisfied with me; Madame de Montespan is in Clagny." "Yes, Sire," answered Bourdaloue, "but God would be more satisfied if Clagny were seventy leagues from Versailles."

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pecially by his fortitude and truth. Many of his sermons, however, have lost for us much of their interest. The enormous partitions and subdivisions of his subject, wrought with a view to the salvation of dependent souls, are somewhat fatiguing. He is interesting to the modern reader chiefly for such sermons as *Sur Madeleine*, *Sur la Pensée de la Mort*, *Sur la Sévérité Évangélique*, *Sur la Médisance* (Slander).

Bourdaloue was active up to the time of his death, in 1704, in vain appealing to his superiors for permission to rest. He had lived to see the first successes of Massillon, and had pronounced thereon the words of Saint John the Baptist: "He must wax great, but I must perish." Massillon, indeed, became great; but Bourdaloue in the eyes of posterity has remained greater.

FÉNELON

François de Salignac de La Mothe de Fénelon, born at the château de Fénelon in Périgord, in 1651, was also a celebrated prelate and preacher; but only two of his sermons have been preserved. The vivid imagination, the penetrating impressiveness of the orator in these two productions make us regret most emphatically the loss of the others; but Fénelon improvised his sermons, and rarely took the trouble of tracing their plan in writing. He preached with enthusiasm without preparation. He is in contrast with Bossuet: it is the spirit of sweetness opposed to that of force.

Saint-Simon has given us an admirable portrait of Fénelon. He has dwelt upon this prelate's noble manner, the seduction in his face, the desire he had to please everyone, and the ease with which he succeeded. The air of the *grand seigneur* with which he invested every word and action enhanced his dignity without ever imparting to it the spirit of pride and disdain. He had the charm which delights men's minds and hearts. These same qualities are found in his works—exquisitely replete with Christian sweetness and Attic grace. Nothing is more precious than his little treatise on *L'Éducation des Filles*. He shows in this treatise the importance of the early education of women, who, being called upon some day to become mothers of families, must in their turn be the first teachers of their children; and he emphatically criticises

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the ignorance in which the young are left. He wishes children to be instructed while being interested, by amusing them, and making them study things rather than books. We should not, he tells us, limit ourselves to teaching them religion; we must make them love it. As for their defects, we must try to prevent these from birth, in order not to have to repress them when developed. The treatise ends with a chapter on the duties of women, and advice on the means of making capable governesses.

Chosen as the preceptor of the Duc de Bourgogne, grandson of Louis XIV, Fénelon composed several works of instruction. His *Fables* in prose, and his *Dialogues des Morts* gently insinuated into the mind of his pupil the general principles of morality. *Télémaque* was intended to teach him political science and the art of reigning. This singular novel is a very beautiful work of imagination and politics. In it Fénelon shows himself less desirous of making his pupil careful of his rights than to preserve him from the pitfalls of luxury, and the dangers of despotism. The political ideas set forth carry the author into the eighteenth century and make him the forerunner of Montesquieu and Rousseau. He showed that the apparently glorious age was undermined by the injustice, egotism, pride, and rapacity of the great.

Télémaque is the development of an episode in the *Odyssey*. In the Homeric poem, Telemachus, tired of waiting for his father, who has not yet returned from the siege of Troy, takes it upon himself to seek him. This voyage, which occupies a minor place in the ancient poem, is the subject of Fénelon's book. Telemachus travels through Sicily, Egypt, Phœnicia, the Isle of Crete, Magna Græcia, or Southern Italy—sometimes threatened with death; a slave, a king, a general; at times alone, more frequently in the company of the goddess of wisdom, who has taken the form of Mentor, his governor, in order to inspire in him the ideas of an ideal morality, of a sound political theory, and devotion to humanity. Here and there are graceful and interesting pictures that divert the reader; such are: the sojourn of Telemachus in the island of Ogygia, where Calypso ruled, and his descent into the subterranean fires—passages containing an admirable picture of the happiness of good men in another life; the adventures

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of Philoctetes, abandoned in the Isle of Lemnos—and so on. Fénelon criticises ostentation, conquests, absolute power—that is to say, the whole governmental system of Louis XIV—most unfavorably. Louis XIV would not pardon the writer, and Cambrai was the place of exile where the prelate passed his life, far from the king and the favors of the court. It meant much to have drawn upon himself the hatred of the prince; but he suffered a greater misfortune when, in embracing Quietism in his *Maximes des Saints*, he incurred the censures of Bossuet and the Holy See. Condemned by Pope Innocent XII for this work, Fénelon gave a great example of Christian submission when he himself announced to his diocesans the sentence passed upon him, and forbade the reading of his book. This prompt submission brought him more honor than the victory won by Bossuet through violence. “The Eagle of Meaux” was not satisfied until he had silenced “the Swan of Cambrai,”¹ whose incontestable merit perhaps overshadowed him, and whose fine action prompted the Pope’s severe criticism of Bossuet: “If Fénelon loves God, Bossuet does not love his neighbor.” Fénelon died in 1715.

FLÉCHIER

Esprit Fléchier, son of a Chandler, was born in 1636 at Pernes, a small city of the diocese of Carpentras, and died in 1710. He began by being a *bel esprit*, very fond of the graces of style, and ended as a bishop (of Nîmes), commendable and grave. He had the good sense never to be ashamed of his origin. Someone in his presence commented on the strange fact that the holder of an episcopal see should have emerged from a shop. “If you had been born in my place,” replied Fléchier, “it is probable that you would still be making candles.” He composed a large number of funeral orations. The first is a tribute of gratitude to Madame de Montausier, the same Julia, who with her mother, presided at the soirées of the Hôtel de Rambouillet: the orator delights in tracing the charm of these reunions where there were “gathered so many persons of

¹ Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, was called *l'Aigle de Meaux*, and Fénelon, Bishop of Cambrai, *le Cygne de Cambrai*.

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quality and merit; where there was wisdom without pride, polish without affectation." His masterpiece is the funeral oration of Turenne, in which, by dint of art, he rises to eloquence in recounting the military exploits, and especially the death of Turenne, struck by a cannon ball in the midst of battle. There still exist some panegyrics by Fléchier, and two mediocre *Histoires*. The most curious of his writings has been known only since 1884. It is his *Mémoires sur les Grands Jours d'Auvergne*, a recital, at once piquant and grave, of the repression that should be exercised on the exactions of the lords of Auvergne. It is an infinitely instructive chapter of history, as well as a work full of life, well planned, and written in the best language. At this time (in 1665) crime was fitly suppressed in the cities; but in the countryside, especially in the mountains, there were noble families who were veritable brigands, who, by means of terrorizing or corruption, were assured of immunity. Nevertheless, there were occasions when justice took its course; from time to time, at undetermined periods, the king would suddenly send a commission charged with receiving the complaints of the poor people, and condemning without pity all the guilty ones, whoever they might be. This is what was called the "Grands Jours." The commission sent out in 1665, discovered a series of horrible crimes, unpunished, and pronounced sentence of death with confiscation of property on more than three hundred nobles. Fléchier, who was a tutor in the home of one of the influential members of this extraordinary tribunal, makes a chronicle of these atrocities in an ingenious and fascinating style.

The style of Fléchier—very labored, wise, symmetrical, and antithetical—has nothing of true eloquence and profound inspiration; a little slow, it is, nevertheless, worth studying as an example of art employing the artifices of elocution. It is said that Fléchier received lessons in this art, and that he had studied under a master who bound himself to make orators in a given time. Villemain called him the French Socrates.

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MASSILLON

Jean Baptiste Massillon was born in 1663 at Hyères, in Provence. He belonged to a family of small birth, and entered into the congregation of the *Oratoire*, preached at the court from 1699 to 1719, and passed the rest of his life at Clermont, Auvergne, of which he had been named bishop, and where he died in 1742.

The first time he preached before Louis XIV, in the midst of a court entertained only by the glory of the king, he took as his text these words of the Gospel: "Happy are those who weep"; and he had the skill to draw from this a high lesson of morality, while at the same time conveying very delicate flattery for the king. Louis XIV, later, said to him: "Father, I have heard great orators; I have been very content with them. Every time that I have heard you, I have been very much discontented with myself." When the king died, Massillon, who alone remained of the century's great orators, paid the last tributes of France to the memory of Louis. The oration begins with a sublime sentence. The king, during his lifetime, had been overwhelmed with flattery, and hailed with the title, "Great." Massillon, looking over the heads of the assembly, and seeing the royal cenotaph, exclaimed: "God alone is great, my brethren!" These words have redounded more to Massillon's glory than all the rest of his work. Louis XV was at that time only seven years old; nevertheless, Massillon was asked to preach before him, and it was on this occasion that he composed the *Petit Carême*, an epitome of ten sermons, addressed less to the young king than to his entourage. Everything in the *Petit Carême* hinges on the duties of superiors toward inferiors. There are, beneath the touching gentleness of the orator, certain tendencies which were in accord with the sentiments of the philosophers of the epoch; moreover, these philosophers held Massillon in singular esteem. Voltaire, who always kept one of Massillon's volumes on his table, admired very much the effectiveness of his diction, and the rare purity of his style, saying of him: "He is the preacher who knew the world best; more flowery than Bourdaloue, more agreeable, and with an eloquence which bespeaks the courtier, the academician, and the man of brains; withal, a moderate and tolerant philosopher."

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Massillon wrote his sermons and learned them by heart, like Bourdaloue; but while reciting them, he cast his eyes on the audience, and his gestures added to the charm of the sermon—for he exercised a veritable charm. Bossuet had addressed himself to the imagination, Bourdaloue to reason; Massillon addressed himself to the heart. The first preached dogma; the second, dogma and morality; the third, especially morality. Although he did not astound his hearers like Bossuet, he sometimes attained effects of great eloquence. We are told, for instance, that in his sermon on the *Petit Nombre des Élus* (On the Chosen Few), at the moment when he said, “If Jesus should suddenly appear in the midst of us, how many righteous men would he find?”—the whole audience rose in astonishment. This sermon made so great a sensation in Paris that Massillon was called to Versailles to preach before Louis XIV. It is said of the bellringer of St. Eustache, in Paris, where the sermon was preached, that he went about exclaiming: “It is I, it is I who have rung in the famous sermon.” The sermon on “Alms,” and that on the “Sanctity of the Christian,” produced analogous effects. These works are part of the *Grand Carême*, which is composed of forty-two sermons.

Massillon was the last great orator of the seventeenth-century pulpit. The following extract is from “On the Chosen Few”:

“I shall confine myself to you, my brethren, who are here assembled. I do not speak of the rest of men, I regard you as if you were the only ones on earth; and this is the thought which occupies and terrifies me. I am supposing that this is your last hour, and the end of the world; that the heavens are about to open over your heads, and Jesus Christ to appear in His glory in the midst of this temple, and that you are assembled in it only to await Him like trembling criminals on whom one is to pronounce either a sentence of forgiveness or a decree of eternal death. For there is no use flattering yourselves; you will die such as you are to-day. All these desires for change which beguile you will continue to do so until your deathbed; it is the experience of all epochs. All that you will then find in yourselves that is new will, perhaps, be a little greater reckoning than that which you would have to

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render to-day; and from what you would be if it came to judging you at this moment, you can almost decide what will happen to you at your death."

FORENSIC ELOQUENCE

Previous to Louis XIII, the eloquence which characterized the bar was bombastic and in bad taste. The lawyer confined himself to an empty display of knowledge in matters of no moment, and forsook argument for long citations of the poets and of Latin authors. The judges, in their turn, were forced to listen to these prolix, absurd and pretentious dissertations which Racine so aptly ridicules in his comedy, *Les Plaideurs*.

Olivier Patru contributed mostly to the reform of forensic eloquence. His success was due to the rectitude of his judgment, the purity of his style, and the restraint of his citations. His fault lay in his too carefully polished phrases, which lacked inspiration and impulse. After thirty years of law practice, he devoted himself to literary work, and divided the honors with Vaugelas as master of the French language. He was received into the Academy, where he introduced the custom of the *Discours de remerciements*, a custom which still prevails. This innovation was called *éloquence académique*.

Paul Pellisson is cited as a forensic orator on account of his *Mémoires* in defense of Fouquet, whose friend and protégé he was, and to whom he remained faithful until the unfortunate minister's death. Pellisson braved the wrath of Louis XIV, who had condemned Fouquet, and even partook of his captivity for four years in the Bastille, where he composed his *Mémoires*. He was refused ink and paper, so he wrote on the margin of his books with a mixture of toasted bread dissolved in wine. His *Mémoires* are a masterpiece of dialectics and of style. After he left the Bastille, Louis XIV, to reward him for so much fidelity, accorded him a pension and some lucrative offices.

CHAPTER XVII

LE SIÈCLE DE LOUIS XIV

CORNEILLE, Descartes, Pascal, filled the first half of that greatest of French literary epochs—the seventeenth century. Notwithstanding the diversity of their genius, these three men are related to one another by certain ties of the intellect. The characteristics which they possess in common are spiritual nobility, a sublime fervor, a simplicity in grandeur. “We feel,” says Demogeot, “that a majestic harmony is established among these most illustrious representatives of French thought. But though they had a bond of unity in the spirit of the century, they lacked a center of government. Meanwhile, there was growing up, amid the bloody frivolities of the Fronde, the man who was first to give to France what she most desired—the severe unity which is her strength and glory.

“Royalty—the material personification of a people—was at that time the only form under which the nation could see and understand itself; and Louis XIV¹ was the most glorious expression of that royalty. His person seemed made for the rôle: his figure, his carriage, his beauty, and his stately air, all bespoke the sovereign; a natural majesty accompanied all his actions, and commanded respect. His deficiency of education was offset by great good sense. He had especially the instinct of power—the feeling of the necessity of directing destinies, together with that faith in himself so essential to the exercise of command over others. Besides, he took possession without diffidence of all the living forces of the nation. He entered into his epoch as if into his house. His maxim of rule was quite opposed to that of vulgar tyranny; he

¹ Son of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, born 1638, died 1715.

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wished to unify in order that he might reign. He concentrated at the foot of his throne all that was characterized by influence or splendor: nobility, fortune, science, genius, bravery, shone about his crown like streams of light."

It was fitting that he should be called the Sun King. Succeeding to the ministerial supremacy perfected by Richelieu and Mazarin, Louis XIV, with royal power and authority founded absolute monarchy in France. He considered himself the representative of God on earth—as the "participant in His knowledge as well as of His authority." All the great men as well as the people saw in their king the representative of God on earth, and to serve the king meant to serve God. He was truly the whole state—"l'État, c'est moi," and everyone bent before him, nobility, Parliament, Third Estate, even the clergy. Extreme centralization, passive obedience, the cult of the royal person raised to the status of dogma, completed the absorption of the nation, the incarnation of the people in a single man.

Versailles is the symbolic work of Louis XIV's reign. It reveals its thought, its grandeur, its immense and cruel egotism. France paid for the construction of Versailles a sum which to-day would equal four hundred millions of francs (\$80,000,000). "Saint-Germain," remarks Saint-Simon, "offered to Louis XIV a complete town which its situation alone was sufficient to maintain as such. He left it for Versailles—the saddest and most ungrateful of all places—without scenery, without forests, without water or earth, because everything there is moving sand and marsh. He decided to tyrannize over Nature, to conquer her by force of art and wealth. There was only a very miserable tavern in that place; he built there an entire city."

Jules Hardouin Mansard¹ constructed the place. Charles Lebrun² was occupied for eighteen years in decorating it.

¹ It is to François Mansard, great-uncle of the above, that the invention of the Mansard roofs is attributed.

² Charles Lebrun, a famous painter (1619–1690), profited by his singular favor with Louis XIV to procure the foundation of a French school at Rome in 1666. Young Frenchmen of talent are sent to this academy at Rome, to study painting, sculpture, and music at the expense of the state. The series of "Battles of Alexander" in the Louvre forms the principal

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He represented the exploits of the Sun King in an allegorical manner in twenty-seven paintings on the ceiling of the grand gallery, and mythology was the magnificent allegory of which Louis XIV was the reality. Conquered nations were personified in it. Holland, Germany, Spain, and even Rome bowed there to the king. Lebrun was the creator of the Louis XIV style.

A third artist completed Versailles. Le Nôtre created a landscape for this mansion. "From the windows of his incomparable glass gallery, Louis saw only that which was his own. The entire horizon was his work, for his garden comprised the whole of it. Those groves, those straight avenues, were only the indefinite extension of the palace; it was a vegetable architecture which completed and reproduced the architecture in stone. The trees grew only regularly, in squares; water, conducted into this arid place at great expense, spouted in regular designs. A thousand statues of marble and bronze were the mythological pictures of this château of verdure, and, like those of Lebrun, presented the apotheosis of the king and his amours. Louis was, indeed, the soul of his court as of his palace. It was he who inspired grace and spirit in women, valor and chivalry in soldiers, emulation and almost genius in artists. The courtiers lived and died at his glance. Far from fleeing display as a burden, he was at his ease in his rôle of king; he played it with the satisfaction and happiness of a great artist. He gathered about him, and tastefully distributed this brilliant world which belonged to him."

Louis XIV's army was the largest and best organized in Europe, and his generals the greatest. His diplomacy controlled all courts. He built monuments, he created academies.¹

Laws and customs were codified; industry and trade were developed; the French nation excelled all others in the arts

work of Lebrun. The Louvre had its beginning in a tower erected for the *louveteiers* (masters of the wolf-hounds) in what was then a forest abounding in wolves (*loups*). In our time the Louvre has become the richest artistic museum in the world. Its principal architects were Pierre Lescot, Lemmercier, Du Cerceau, Claude Perrault, and Visconti.

¹ Of inscriptions and medals, 1663; of sciences, 1666; of music, 1669; of architecture, 1671; and others.

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and sciences; French writers proclaimed the king as the ideal prince, and arrayed his court with the splendors of the emperors of Rome and Byzantium. Versailles with its magnificence became the envy of all monarchs. We know that under Louis XIV letters and arts were carried to a high degree of perfection by a brilliant constellation of prose writers, poets, and painters: Corneille, Racine, Molière, in the drama; La Fontaine and Boileau in poetry; Bossuet, Fénelon, Fléchier, in oratory; La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld in moral criticism; Pascal in philosophy; Saint-Simon and de Retz in history; Poussin, Le Lorrain, Lebrun, Perrault, Mansard, Girardon, Puget, in art—these were the principal representatives of the century of Louis XIV. Moreover, letters not only reflected the regularity of the Great Reign, but they received from it elegance and grace. The society of women; the intrigues of the heart, the science of the passions; the sprightly conversations, with no real basis, in which verbal embroidery was everything, in which the need of saying everything, the obligation of concealing certain things, was imperative.

In this epoch written conversation became the literary type. The preceding age had expressed itself especially in *Mémoires*. The seventeenth century also had its *Mémoire* writers: Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Madame de Motteville, Madame de La Fayette, Madame de Caylus; La Rochefoucauld, Louis XIV himself, and Bussy-Rabutin, whose scandalous chronicle *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*, a cynical description of the adventures of the ladies of the court, brought him into disfavor with the court, and caused his imprisonment in the Bastille; Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, eclipsed all his rivals by the fire of his narrations and the depth of his portraits.

The French language reached its perfection in this epoch. Voltaire in his *Siècle de Louis XIV* says: "The language under Louis XIV was carried to the highest state of perfection in all genres." A talent for conversation—brilliant and flexible as well as elegant—was developed under the reign of Louis XIV. This art, practiced by society, produced a rich literary genre—the epistolary. No literature has anything of this type to compare with the names of Ninon de L'Enclos,

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Mesdames de Montespan, de Coulanges, de la Sablière, de Maintenon. But the most celebrated name of all is that of Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné (1626–1696), whose correspondence has a place among the masterpieces of the century. She was the joy and sunbeam of this distinguished and polished society. Sainte-Beuve has described Madame de Sévigné as a laughing blonde, very sprightly and roguish. The brightness of her mind passed into and shone in her changing eyes, and, as she says herself, in her “particolored iris.” She received a classic education and shone at the court of Louis XIII by her brilliance of mind rather than her beauty. Separated from her husband, she devoted herself to her children, and when the Marquis de Sévigné was killed in a duel, she never married again, although only twenty-six years old. Madame de Sévigné went into the world beloved, sought after, courted, sowing unfortunate passions round about her, without in the least meaning it. Her cousin, Bussy-Rabutin; her preceptor, Ménage; the Prince of Conti, brother of the great Condé; Fouquet and Turenne—all vainly sighed for her. A widow at twenty-six, with a great fortune and remarkable beauty, she devoted herself entirely to her two children, especially her daughter, the handsome and cold Madame de Grignan, for whom she had up to the end of her life an extreme passion. Arnauld, of the Port-Royal, scolded her very severely, saying that she was a pretty pagan, and that she was making of her daughter the idol of her heart.

It was because of a mother’s love, in order to entertain her daughter—“majestically tired in the midst of the fêtes and chicaneries of provincial society”—that she undertook to write a series of letters for twenty-five of the most curious years of the reign of Louis XIV. The diversity of her studies enabled her to become an excellent writer, but the qualities of her literary style are such as one does not acquire: imagination, sensibility and wit, added to rapidity of touch; unlabored and correct phrasing, and a language which does not fear the right word, and ignores prudery and timidity. Hers was the model of the epistolary genre. Her correspondence, like an “enchanted mirror, makes us know the court and its intrigues, the king and his mistresses, the church, the theater, literature, war, the entertainments, the banquets, and

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the toilets of the time." All is animated and colored while passing through the mind and the pen of this charming woman. The abandon and facility of the style contribute to the illusion. It is a living, spirited conversation, piquant, variegated, in which is found all the grace, all the unexpected diction, all the heartiness and warmth of a person of great intellect, soul, instruction, and reason.¹

Madame de Sévigné's letters to Charles de Sévigné, to Abbé de Coulanges,² to Madame de La Fayette show an excellent literary style, but the letters addressed to her daughter are most exquisite of all. She chats with her daughter and "lets her pen trot with loose bridle." In these letters are found the French style *par excellence*—a finely fashioned mind, an easily excited imagination, a love for the natural—expressed in a firm and facile manner with great simplicity, and a perfection of form which makes Madame de Sévigné the master in this particular branch of literature.

MADAME DE LA FAYETTE.

The period from 1630 until 1660 was one of the great epochs of the French novel, and literature was almost entirely limited to fiction. The novels of Mademoiselle de Scudéry marked a transition from the novel of La Calprenède (the prince of romantic fiction) to the novel of Madame de La Fayette. These novels of Mademoiselle de Scudéry offered a psychological as well as historic interest. "The novels of Madame de La Fayette," says Géroze, "were more than a novelty; they were almost a revolution." But it was the revolution of good sense, good taste, and simplicity which were to replace the extravagance, the bombast, and the impossible inventions of the old-style novel. The novels of Madame de La Fayette have remained the very type of moral analysis. Her first attempt was *Zayde*, a story of adven-

¹ The best edition of Madame de Sévigné's letters was prepared by Paul Mesnard for the series of *Les Grands Écrivains de la France*.

² Madame de Sévigné's uncle, the Abbé de Coulanges, directed the education of his niece who, orphaned when a child, proved the joy and happiness of "le Bien Bon," as she called the Abbé.

³ Marie Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, Comtesse de La Fayette (1634-1693).

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ture and sentimentalism—a transition between the heroic romance of Mademoiselle de Scudéry and the psychological novel. The scene is laid in Spain; the hero and heroine, at their first meeting, cannot understand each other except by gestures, since one is Arabian and the other Spanish. When they meet again, the Arabian girl speaks Spanish and the Spaniard, Arabian; they blush and understand.

La Princesse de Clèves is far superior to *Zayde*. It is a novel in which passion is analyzed with much delicacy and decorum—a modern novel. The chief scene is that in which M. de Clèves, astonished at seeing his wife determined to remain in the country, questions her, and learns that she is fleeing from the Duc de Nemours, who loves her, and whose love she returns. M. de Clèves dies, some time after this, from chagrin and jealousy. This leaves his widow free to marry the duke, who still loves her; but she reproaches herself for the sentiments she had entertained toward him during the lifetime of her husband, and retires to a convent. The period of this story is nominally the reign of Henry II; but we feel ourselves fully in the seventeenth century, at the court of Louis XIV; the Duchesse de Valentinois is Madame de Montespan; Marie Stuart is but another name for the Duchesse d'Orléans; in the Prince of Clèves, we detect M. de La Fayette; the Duc de Nemours is no other than La Rochefoucauld. La Rochefoucauld, who was a fast friend of Madame de La Fayette, had a great influence on her literary development; her work became more thoughtful and psychologically deeper. "He gave me wit, but I have reformed his heart," she said. Madame de Sévigné wrote: "Nothing could be compared to the confidence and charm of their friendship."

Madame de La Fayette has left memoirs of this court; also a *Vie d'Henriette d'Angleterre*, in which the author enters into very intimate details, so that one might fancy himself to be reading a real novel. It is all written in a distinguished style, and with a precision which is not in the least affected.

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

François, Duc de La Rochefoucauld, and Prince de Marsillac, born at Paris in 1613, died 1680, was the great initiator

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in moral studies. He took part in the Fronde, but it was less from political conviction than to please the Duchesse de Longueville. He left curious Mémoires of this epoch, written in a firm and precise style, but much less interesting than those of de Retz. The book which has made the reputation of La Rochefoucauld, is his little collection of *Maximes*.¹ He frequented the salon of Madame de Sablé, and there he got his inspiration for them. Every salon of the seventeenth century favored some special development of a literary genre: Mademoiselle de Scudéry's was noted for its madrigals and verses, the Princesse de Montpensier's for literary portraits, and Madame de Sablé's for maxims. The maxims of La Rochefoucauld are masterpieces of style; no one before him had attained to his precision and clearness, to his skill in putting an edge on thought.

The philosophic system of La Rochefoucauld deserves less eulogy; it is bitter and pessimistic. For him all human actions have no other motive than self-love, and his whole book is, in the last analysis, only this thought recurring in a hundred different ways. He reasons thus: virtue has its recompense, but in being virtuous it is only our desire to gain the recompense. He does not admit that a good action may be performed naturally and disinterestedly. He judged the human race by the fault finders with whom he had lived; in his last years he became completely saddened and misanthropic. The following selections from his *Maximes* are characteristic:

We should gain more by letting ourselves be seen as we are than as we are not.

Narrow-mindedness makes obstinacy; we do not easily believe in that which is beyond our range of vision.

How can we expect that another will keep our secret if we have not been able to keep it ourselves?

In order to know things well, we must know them in detail; and, since this is almost infinite, our knowledge is always superficial and imperfect.

As it is the characteristic of great minds to make many things understood with few words, so—on the contrary—little minds have the gift of talking a great deal and saying nothing.

¹ The full title is *Réflexions et Sentences, ou Maximes Morales*.

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The desire to appear skillful often prevents our becoming so.

The true way to be deceived is to believe oneself shrewder than others.

The mind is always the dupe of the heart.

Everyone complains of his memory, and no one complains of his judgment.

Self-love is the greatest of all flatterers.

It needs greater virtues to sustain good fortune than bad.

We are never so ridiculous by the qualities which we have as by those which we pretend to have.

Passions are the only orators which always persuade. They are like a kind of nature whose rules are infallible; and the simplest man who has passion is more persuasive than the most eloquent who has none.

Epigrams, like proverbs, are the condensation of thought. In the case of proverbs, the condensation is often accomplished through the process of ages and the friction of many minds. The epigram, when it is the work of one man, is recast by him again and again, until he can compress it no more. In a first edition of the *Maximes*, we read: "There is no pleasure which one gives so willingly to a friend as that of offering our advice." In a later collection this becomes: "We give nothing so liberally as our advice."

LE CARDINAL DE RETZ

Paul de Gondi, Cardinal of Retz, born at Montmirail in 1614, died 1679, was destined from his childhood to the ecclesiastical career, for which he was little suited. Dr. Retz had begun by telling, in a little work full of energy, the same *Conjuración de Fiesque* from which Schiller took one of his dramas. Richelieu, to whom they brought this composition of an eighteen-year-old writer, exclaimed: "There is a dangerous mind!" In 1643, after being appointed coadjutor of the Archbishop of Paris (Henri de Gondi, his uncle), he put himself at the front in the Fronde. He became a Frondeur to gratify Madame de Longueville; he himself has explained it: "To please her beautiful eyes, I made war on kings, I would have warred against gods." De Retz was the historian of the Fronde. After the defeat of the Frondeurs at the battle of

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the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, he made his peace with the court and received the cardinal's hat. Mistress of all power, Anne of Austria had him arrested; but he succeeded in escaping from his prison and left the kingdom. When he returned to France he gave up politics and finished his life in retirement, writing his *Mémoires*—a model of that kind of informal history which flourished in the seventeenth century.

LA BRUYÈRE

Jean de La Bruyère, born at Paris in 1645, died 1696, was for some time treasurer in the district of Caen. On the recommendation of Bossuet, the great Condé engaged him to teach history to his grandson, the Duke of Bourbon. La Bruyère was, above all, a man of honor; this is the opinion of Boileau, Saint-Simon, and all of his contemporaries. Virtue was for him a kind of beauty. He lived in a sort of retirement; and in so far as he was a man of the world, he looked at the scene without becoming an actor.

"He was," says Saint-Simon, "very disinterested. He was content all his life with a pension of a thousand crowns, which the duke gave him," as preceptor for his grandson Louis de Bourbon. His patron, the duke, was "brutal, vicious, and of an unbearably ferocious character." The duchess was a "scornful, mocking, sarcastic person, incapable of friendship, and very capable of hatred; wicked, proud, implacable, with a fertile mind for black artifices, and the most cruel songs, which she inflicted on people whom she pretended to love, who lived with her." La Bruyère suffered much from these eccentricities, and from the haughty disdain and humiliating condescension to which he was subjected by friends of the house.

Taine tells us that "the great lords of the time considered men of letters and artists as a kind of amusing domestics. The Pope requested the king "to lend him Mansard," as you would request your friend to lend you his horse or his dog. We find in La Bruyère's book no less than twenty "thoughts" on the scorn attached to the condition of a subordinate and man of letters. The points which he makes are penetrating and profound; yet we can always read between

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the lines an animus underlying the moral eloquence of his work. We can often recognize the restrained and bitter smile of a superior soul which sees that it is scorned, and returns a hundredfold, but in silence, the contempt it has endured. Unfortunately, this too frequent and too pervasive sentiment soon poisons all the others. We end by becoming incapable of gayety, or even of calmness; we no longer see in the vices of man the interior necessity which renders them endurable, nor in the follies of the world the agreeable nonsense which makes them amusing. We lose our serene philosophy and sense of humor; we become satirical and misanthropic. The feeling of sadness increases, everything becomes tense and strained; the author speaks only in insulting tirades, or rasping, reproachful phrases. This is, indeed, the habitual tone of La Bruyère; his style, however perfect it is, fatigues the reader; the extreme and painful emotions which fill the work are communicated to him; we wish harm when we have read his books, and we wish it to the whole race. He leaves, with more force and less monotony, the same impression left by Rousseau; both were profoundly and incessantly wounded by the disproportion of their genius and their fortune, and their secret chagrin has embittered and colored all their work." . . .

La Bruyère was at heart gracious and full of tenderness—traits which come to the surface at times, but are almost always concealed by his biting satire. The chapter on the heart, and that on women, are sown with noble and exquisite thought, contrasting strongly with the bitter irony of the rest, and affording a glimpse of what he might have been if circumstances had not turned him aside toward more violent and sadder expressions of literature. . . . A final trait, common to La Bruyère and Rousseau, marks his character; it is the incurable melancholy, the sadness in the very depths of his soul, the loss of all illusion, the disgust with men, the cruel feeling of human misery. Witness words like these: "We must laugh before being happy, for fear of dying before having laughed. Life is short, tiresome, it is wholly spent in hoping, and we put rest into the future as well as joy, at the age when often our best possessions—health and youth—have already disappeared. The time comes which overtakes even

our desires; we are in the midst of them when the fever seizes us and we perish: if we had recovered, it would only be to hope still longer." His book attempts to compute in how many ways man can be unendurable.

Jean Formey writes: "He (La Bruyère) came almost daily to sit with a bookseller named Michallet, in whose company he perused new books and amused himself with a very pretty little girl, daughter of the bookseller, who had struck up a friendship with him. One day, he drew a manuscript from his pocket and said to Michallet: 'Will you print this? I don't know whether you will find it worth while; but in case of success, the profit will be for my little friend.' The bookseller undertook the edition (*Les Caractères*). Scarcely had he put it on sale than it was exhausted, and he was obliged to reprint the book three or four times; it brought him two or three hundred thousand francs. This was the unforeseen dower of his daughter, who made in consequence a most advantageous marriage."

La Bruyère's only work, *Les Caractères*, is composed of sixteen chapters, in which he passes in review men of letters, prelates, women, courtiers, and bourgeois; in which he discusses fashion, judgements, the government of states; or takes to task the incredulous ones who were at that time called the "esprits forts." The full title of his work is *Les caractères de Théophraste*¹ *traduit du grec avec les caractères ou les mœurs de ce siècle*. Here is an extract from Chapter VI, "On the Good Things of Fortune; the Rich and the Poor Man":

"Giton has a fresh complexion, full face and hanging cheeks, a steady and assured glance, broad shoulders, thick chest, and a firm and deliberate bearing: he speaks with confidence, makes the man who is talking to him repeat, and enjoys only indifferently what his companion says to him. He unfolds a large handkerchief, and blows his nose with a great noise; he spits to a great distance, and sneezes very

¹ *Ethici Charakteres* of Theophrastus, Greek philosopher, 370-288 B.C. La Bruyère's translation is a supplement to his own character sketches, of which there are 1,119. The *Characters* of Theophrastus were the original models of Hall's *Characteristics of Virtues and Vices*; of Earle's *Microcosmographie*; of Overbury's *Characters or Witty Descriptions of the Properties of Sundry Persons*.

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loudly; he sleeps during the day, he sleeps at night, and profoundly; he snores in company. At table, and while walking, he occupies more space than any other person. He keeps in the middle when walking with his equals; he stops and they stop, he continues to walk and they walk; they all regulate themselves by him. He interrupts, he corrects those who are speaking; he is not interrupted, they listen to him as long as he wishes to speak, agree with him in everything, and believe the news he relates. If he sits down, you see him ensconce himself in an armchair, cross his legs one over the other, knit his brow, lower his hat over his eyes, in order not to see anyone; or he raises it after a while and uncovers his forehead by way of pride and audacity. He is lively, a great laugh, impatient, presumptuous, choleric, free thinker and politic, mysterious in regard to the affairs of the time; he thinks he has talent and brains. He is rich.

“ Phédon is hollow-eyed, of a flushed complexion, his body dried up, his face lean. He sleeps little and very lightly. He is absent-minded, a dreamer, and he has the air of an idiot in spite of his intellect; he forgets to say what he knows, or to speak of events which are known to him, and if he does so sometimes, he makes a bungle of it. He thinks he is boring those to whom he speaks, so he talks briefly, but without animation; no one listens to him, he does not make his hearers laugh. He applauds and smiles at what others say to him, he is of their opinion; he runs, he flies to do them little services, he is complaisant, a flatterer, officious. He is mysterious in his affairs, does not always speak the truth; he is superstitious, scrupulous, timid. He walks diffidently and lightly, apparently afraid to tread the ground, with eyes lowered, and dares not raise them on those who pass. He is never among those who form a circle for discussion; he stands behind the one who speaks, furtively notices what is said, and retires if he is looked at. He occupies no space, and takes up no room. He goes along with bent shoulders, his hat lowered over his eyes so that he may not be seen; he wraps and conceals himself in his coat; there are no streets or galleries so obstructed and filled with people through which he does not find the means of making his way without effort, and gliding through without being perceived. If he is asked

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to sit down, he barely places himself on the edge of the chair. He speaks low in conversation and articulates badly; outspoken, nevertheless, on public affairs; discontented with the epoch; in a mediocre way, prejudiced against the ministers and the ministry. He never opens his mouth except to answer; he coughs, he blows his nose behind his hat, he almost spits upon himself, and he waits until he is alone to sneeze—or, if this happens in spite of him, it is without the knowledge of the company, and costs no one either a greeting or a compliment.¹ He is poor.”

SAINT-SIMON

Louis de Rouvray, son of Claude de Saint-Simon, favorite of Louis XIII, was born in 1675, at Versailles. The king was his sponsor, and he became a page at court, and then a soldier. Later, he handed in his resignation, and remained at the court without employment. He was a malcontent from his birth and by family tradition. He had a great respect for Louis XIII, “the king of the nobles,” but deplored the “long règne de vile bourgeoisie” of Louis XIV. At the death of Louis XIV, he favored the party of the Duc d’Orléans, with whom the Duc du Maine disputed the regency; and he was intrusted by the regent with the mission of negotiating with Spain the marriage of Louis XV with the Infanta. Later he retired to his estates, where he occupied himself with the edition of his *Mémoires*, which are very voluminous (123 volumes). He exercised no influence whatsoever on the literature of his time, as he worked with the greatest secrecy. His *Mémoires* which, according to his last will, were not to appear until fifty years after his death (1725), were confiscated by the French Government, and taken to the archives of the *Ministère des affaires étrangères*. They were not permitted to be made public until 1830. In these *Mémoires du Duc de Saint-Simon sur le règne de Louis XIV et la Régence*, he depicts with admirable penetration the thousand incidents of the court, and the physiognomy of the courtiers.

Saint-Simon had begun to gather the matter for this work

¹ “Dieu vous bénisse!” after a sneeze.

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at the age of nineteen years. Every evening he jotted down, without anyone observing him, all that he had seen and heard during the day; and it is from these notes, and not from more or less vague recollection, that he composed his book. It has been said of him, that he was "curious like Froissart, penetrating like La Bruyère, and passionate like Alceste in Molière." During all the time of his sojourn at the court, Saint-Simon imposed on himself the rôle of spy on all that world which paraded around him — studying faces, noting gestures, hearing every word, and seeking to read the very bottom of the soul. His *Mémoires* were written in a strange, incorrect style. He never revised his sentences and never erased a word. "He writes without order (*à la diable*) for posterity," said Chateaubriand. His portraits also seem thrown together, composed at hazard, but with great vigor. Saint-Simon is the greatest French word-painter of historical portraits.

The transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries shows a decline in classicism. Fénelon, in his *Lettre à l'Académie*, achieved a victory for the ancients in the "Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns," but did not much retard the impulse toward modernism. Racine had created a school; but among the great number of tragic writers who sought to walk in his steps, only a few, such as de Lafosse and Crébillon had some dramatic talent united with a certain originality. Classic tragedy fell altogether into decadence with the dramatic poets, Jean Galbert de Campistron, Lagrange-Chancel, Longepierre, and tended toward the melodramatic. Brunetière tells us that of the many pieces of this period, there are not six which are remembered, not even one, which one dares represent, and there is not an author to whom the history of literature accords more than a passing mention.

Antoine de Lafosse's (about 1653–1708) tragedy *Manlius Capitolinus*, an adaptation of Thomas Otway's "Venice Preserved," had a prodigious success in its time, and was still considered a masterpiece by Villemain. It is said, however, that the play owed much of its popularity to the masterful interpretation of the great actor Talma. An interesting document preserved in the archives of the Théâtre-Français reads:

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"Pass the citizen Bonaparte to this evening's performance of *Manlius*. (Signed) Talma." Of this document, Frédéric Febvre, in *Le Gaulois*, relates a story told him by Talma's own son. It seems that Emperor Napoleon when he was a lieutenant of artillery was in the habit of haunting the Palais-Royal Galleries in the hope that he might see the tragedian, and that Talma, espying him, would whisper to his companion: "The other way, if you don't mind. I see Bonaparte coming, and I'm afraid he'll ask me for seats." Later, Napoleon, who ardently admired Talma, had him appear in a performance in Erfurt before an "audience of kings."

Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1674-1762) tried to introduce in his tragedies the element of terror which had been the fortune of Æschylus. "Corneille," he said, "took heaven, Racine the earth; there is nothing left for me but hell, and I have thrown myself headlong into it." His plays abound in terrible situations and fearful crimes. Thus in *Atrée et Thyeste*, the prince is represented as offering to his brother, Thyestes, a goblet filled with the blood of his own son. Crébillon later tried to remedy this great defect by introducing tender sentiments, but, for all his expedients, he does not move us.

His best play is *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*. The subject, which is very romantic, was borrowed by the author from a novel of the *Précieuses* school. It concerns a king of Armenia, who, seeing himself overcome by the Romans, does not wish to leave his wife in the power of his enemies. In a fit of jealousy he stabs her and casts her into the river. Zénobie is saved, and later returns, under a false name, to the presence of her husband. The violent character of Rhadamiste, his agitated life, his jealousy, and his remorse, are pictured in a true and striking manner, and contrast happily with the sweet and loving character of Zénobie. Disarmed by this feverish love, she finally pardons him, and is reconciled to her would-be murderer. This work is the only celebrated tragedy that appeared on the French stage in the interval which separates Racine from Voltaire. It is said that, acting on the advice of a friend, Crébillon read his tragedy to Boileau, who had grown old and was ill. Boileau listened attentively enough to the first two scenes; then he rose in anger,

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crying: "What, Monsieur, you wish to hasten my death by reading these detestable verses! I see in you an author compared with whom, Scudéry and Pradon are shining lights. I do not regret to die since my country produces such authors." Brunetière calls the tragedies of Crébillon melodramas in verse. Crébillon had a prodigious memory. He kept in mind the entire play, with all corrections and additions, and did not put it in writing until the time of the performance.

Since the production of the first French opera in 1671, this genre of *divertissement* became very popular. Mazarin had introduced a troupe of singers into France from Italy, where opera was flourishing since the sixteenth century. Perrin and Cambert wrote the words and music of *Pomone*, the first French opera given in 1671. Then Lulli the Italian composer, receiving a privilege from Louis XIV, opened his theater in 1672, under the name of Académie Royale de Musique, for operatic productions, and engaged Quinault at four thousand livres to furnish annually a poem for the opera. Lulli, director and manager of this theater for fourteen years, wrote the music for the ballets which Louis XIV himself danced, and he also put to music Molière's comedy ballets.

Philippe Quinault (1635-1698), wrote twelve opera poems for Lulli, besides sixteen tragedies and comedies, distinguished by a charming and facile style. Quinault was called the "handsome Quirinus," and together with Saint-Évremond, known by his literary correspondence, was a frequenter of the *ruelles* of the salons.

Charles Rollin (1661-1741), the *élève divin*, one of the precursors of reform in modern methods, was one of the most beautiful characters of his time, but a poor historian. He devoted himself entirely to the education of youth. His *Traité des Études*, is a work whose merit still stands. "Nowhere," says Villemain, "has education in letters, the only complete education of the moral man, been rendered more useful and attractive." He published thirteen volumes of *L'Histoire Ancienne*. Montesquieu called Rollin "The Bee of France."

Nicholas Malebranche (1638-1715), one of the great French writers and philosophers of this century, continued the Cartesian method, but essayed to overcome the dualism

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of that philosophy. He wished to conciliate Christianity with Cartesianism by conforming his system to the dogma, and asserting that the human mind and the divine word are one. Arnaud contested his doctrines and Fénelon also undertook to refute them.

Pseudo-classic literature began with Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1670-1741). He studied with the Jesuits, and "commenced as an author" with his *Odes Sacrées*—imitated from the Bible, addressed to the converted old men of the seventeenth century. At the same time he composed licentious epigrams, destined for young libertines who were to be the profligates of the regency. Of his "Ode to Posterity," Voltaire said to him: "Gare que cet écrit in extremis n'aille pas à son adresse!"¹ J. B. Rousseau was the son of a mason of whom he was ashamed. On making his first dramatic success, he said to his father, who had come to congratulate him: "I do not know you!" To which his father answered: "Do not forget that it is the mason who made the poet!"

Rousseau never succeeded in obtaining triumphs in drama, although he thought himself particularly called to that vocation; and the failure of his comedy of *Le Flatteur*, gave birth to infamous and celebrated couplets which brought on him a decree of banishment. He passed his last years in Brussels and in Germany. Piron, author of *La Métromanie* and of many songs and satires, composed his epitaph:

Paris fut son berceau,
Le Brabant fut sa tombe.
Sa vie fut trop longue de moitié—
Trente ans digne d'envie,
Trente ans digne de pitié.²

J. B. Rousseau was especially remarkable as a writer of epigrams. After Racine, Voltaire and Piron, J. B. Rousseau and Lebrun excelled in this pungent form of literature in France. This is Rousseau's epigram against the Prince de Rohan, Cardinal of France:

¹ "Beware that this composition *in extremis* (at death's door) will not reach its address."

² "Paris was his cradle, Brabant his grave. His life was too long by half—for thirty years to be envied, for thirty years to be pitied."

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Un vieux Rohan, tout bouffi de son nom,
Oppressé fut du foudre apoplectique.
Un vieux docteur, homme de grand renom,
Appelé fut dans ce moment critique.
Près du malade, il s'assied, prend le pouls:
"Eh! bien, dit-il, comment vous sentez-vous?"
Point ne répond. Notre rusé Boerhave¹
Lui crie alors d'un ton un peu plus fort:
"Monseigneur!—Rien! Peste! Le cas est grave.
Prince!—Au plus mal!—Votre Altesse! Il est mort."²

Four comic authors came into prominence toward the end of the century: Regnard, Dufresny, Dancourt, and Le Sage. The comedies of Jean François Regnard (1655–1709), are considered the best after Molière. Written with great vivacity and ease, his plays are characterized by their good humor and gayety, and in the facility of dialogue he is unsurpassed. Of his twenty-five plays, several are still favorites on the French stage: *Le Légataire Universel*, *Le Joueur*, *Le Distrain*, *Les Ménechmes*. In Regnard's satires of contemporaneous vices, his only aim has been to provoke laughter. Voltaire said of him: "Qui ne se plaît avec Regnard n'est digne d'admirer Molière."³ A famous adventure which Regnard experienced he describes in his novel *La Provençale*: On a sea voyage from Italy to Marseilles, Regnard was taken prisoner by pirates together with a lady whom he loved, and her husband; Regnard was sold to Achmet-Talem, who made him his cook, and took him to Constantinople. Regnard's family rescued him and he returned to France with the lady of his affections, and made preparations to marry her, when the husband, whom they believed dead,

¹ Famous Dutch doctor, used here as a class-name.

² Old Rohan, all puffed up with his name, was oppressed with an apoplectic stroke. So an old doctor, a man of great renown, was called in at this critical moment. Seating himself, he felt the sick man's pulse. "Well," he said, "how are you?" There was no response. Our crafty Boerhave then called out in a little louder tone: "Monseigneur! . . . No answer! The deuce! The case is grave. Prince! . . . Past recovery! . . . Your Highness! . . . He is dead!"

³ "He who takes no pleasure with Regnard is unworthy of admiring Molière."

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appeared. Regnard then sought distraction in travel, returning after several years to France, where he divided his time between Paris and his château de Grillon, in literary pursuits and pleasure.

Charles Rivière-Dufresny (1648-1724), was successful as musician, artist, architect, poet, novelist, and dramatic author. The incident of his having married his laundress to liquidate his debts to her, furnished Le Sage with a character for his *Diable boiteux*.

Florent Darton, Sieur D'Ancourt (1661-1725), called Dancourt, wrote about sixty comedies, some of which are still popular. He excelled in representing in a satirical manner the customs of his epoch, and especially the power of money and scramble for position. He was at first a lawyer, but having run away with and married a comedian's daughter, he adopted that profession to please her, and remained for thirty-three years at the Comédie-Française as one of its most favorite comedians.

Alain René Le Sage (1668-1747), was a dramatic author and novelist, and was inspired from the start by Spanish literature. The title and plot of his first novel *Le Diable Boiteux*, are taken from the Spanish novel, *El diablo cojuelo*, by Guevara, but the episodes and characters, essentially French, are his own. The author tells how Asmodée, a malicious and tricky servant of the devil, is indebted to a young student, Don Cléophas, for liberating him from the captivity of a magician, and repays him by letting him see from a tower in Madrid the interior of all the houses, whose roofs are uncovered at a signal from the devil's servant. The novelist portrays with amusing humor and fine satire a series of scenes drawn from various walks of life. The success of the work was such that two purchasers had a dispute with weapons for the last copy that remained in a bookstore.

The dramatic works of Le Sage are *Crispin, rival de son maître*, and *Turcaret*. Crispin wishes to marry the fiancée of his master, in order to receive the dower and flee with it. This is only the knavery of valets, but the dialogue is worthy of Molière in its spirit and naturalness. *Turcaret* has a more elevated purpose. People had just been organizing joint-stock societies, and an unbridled era of gambling had

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resulted. Many families had been ruined; but many people without intelligence or education, had found themselves suddenly rich, and wished to mimic the debauched grands seigneurs. These unscrupulous financiers, so much in predominance at the time, are depicted with unsparing vigor. Turcaret is one of these men; and this vulgar and insolent revenue farmer and his corrupt entourage are so true to life, that those who felt that they were hit by his comedy offered a fortune to Le Sage if he would suppress it. He did not consent to this, preferring to lead a life often painful and harassed.

The immortal masterpiece of Le Sage is *Gil Blas*. The hero is a young man whom his parents send forth in search of employment, confiding to him a mule and very little money. *Gil Blas* successively mounts all the rungs of the social ladder. We see him despoiled by tavern keepers and parasites; now connected with thieves, now with doctors, lawyers, players, noble personages; with an archbishop, whose sermons he corrects — and, finally, as secretary of two celebrated ministers who in turn govern Spain. Thus the author brings before us a complete picture of society — interrupting himself, from time to time, to give us sentimental bits which do not equal his comic passages. The narrator, who is *Gil Blas* himself, is a good character—loving and thinking aright, but sometimes doing evil, and exciting our sympathies, in spite of his errors. He is one of the best literary types of France. *Gil Blas* was also a loan from Spain, but the author in this case borrowed only the scene; the fiber of the novel, the characters, so diverse and typical — especially the hero, the true ancestor of Figaro—all this is his own invention. Brunetière says: “The originality of Le Sage’s novel lies in the fact that he has ‘humanized’ that which he imitated of the Spanish novel. To understand the meaning of this word, it suffices to compare *Gil Blas* with his translation of *Estevanville Gonzales*. Of the rogue’s confession in the Spanish novel he made a picture of humanity, and from a succession of indifferent adventures he evolved a satire of the conditions of his time. . . . The importance of Le Sage’s novel lies in the fact of having constituted the realistic novel as a literary genre.”

Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) was one of the most influential

philosopher-theologians and critics of France. He leaned toward skepticism, and was a precursor of the Encyclopedists of the eighteenth century. His *Dictionnaire historique et critique* is still considered a good book of reference for the culture and literature of the seventeenth century. His *Réponses à un provincial* is a collection of philosophical and religious dissertations. Mennechet writes: "Attacked often with violence, Bayle defended himself always with moderation, and merited by his virtues and talent that France, who banished him, should consider it an honor to number him among her illustrious children."

Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757), born at Rouen, was a nephew of Corneille. His importance is almost entirely confined to the influence which he exercised on his circle, by the universality of his knowledge, and the charm of his conversation. He was also for many years the oracle of the salons. In his last years, he replied to a lady who asked his age: "Sh-h! Death has forgotten me." Fontenelle introduced science into the domain of literature, and had a remarkable talent for putting science within the reach of ordinary people; it is this which made the success of his *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, a kind of astronomical treatise. For forty-three years he was secretary of the Academy of Sciences — a post which exercised his talents agreeably. In his *Histoire de l'Académie*, he touches everything with a light hand, and makes clear to the least cultivated minds the most perplexing scientific questions. It was he who first drew knowledge out of the great tomes in which it was concealed, and made it easy of access to ordinary persons. The *Éloges des académiciens*, which he was officially called on to pronounce, are perhaps the most interesting part of this work of Fontenelle, and one of his best claims on posterity. His other works include *Histoire des Oracles*, *Histoire du Théâtre Français*, *Vie de Pierre Corneille* and *Traité sur le Bonheur*. In his *Digression sur les modernes*, he espoused the cause of the moderns in the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*.

Fontenelle was a pronounced skeptic of marvelous intelligence. His thought is tinctured with a kind of discretion compounded of prudence and good taste. He used to say:

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“ If my hands were full of truths, I should take care not to open them,” alluding to the persecution which has too often assailed the innovator. Fontenelle lived to be a centenarian. He therefore belonged to two centuries, ended the list of writers belonging to the seventeenth century, and with Bayle began the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE EIGHTEENTH, OR PHILOSOPHIC, CENTURY

WITH reference to the preceding period, the eighteenth century is at once a continuation, a development, and a reaction. It is a continuation, inasmuch, as in certain points it copies its predecessor, but with weakening modifications; and this is true, especially of three forms of art — tragedy, comedy, and preaching. The tragedy was that of the classic school badly imitated. Voltaire alone gave a certain *éclat* to this genre, and his tragedy shows clearly the traces of development, though he made of it an instrument to propagate his ideas. But with respect to comedy and, particularly, preaching, we find only impairment of quality. Comedy flourished, it is true, but it was an imitation of Molière, whose principal followers were Regnard, Dufresny, Destouches, Dancourt, Piron, and Gresset. The *oraison funèbre* was stilled, and the eloquence of the pulpit ended with Massillon.

The eighteenth century is a development, because toward its close, worn out with analysis, it saw the efflorescence of the poetry of nature. But especially is this period a reaction; that indeed is its dominant character. Thus it is that, among peoples of great intellectual development, "centuries succeed one another, and the human mind accomplishes its destiny." "Nothing is more different, and, nevertheless, nothing is more closely connected than these two epochs," M. Villemain has said.

Indeed, there is connection, or continuity, between action and its consequence — reaction. All reaction is vindictive and partial, resembling reprisals. That of the eighteenth century is excessive. Three authorities were denied and almost overturned: the ancients, the religious, and social institutions. All the problems of life were solved, everything

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was interpreted and illumined, without the preliminary labor of study. Goethe's *Gottes unbegreiflich hohen Werken* found no echo in the France of the eighteenth century. Finally, in politics, there was pronounced reaction against authorities and institutions—a reaction, doubtless, purely theoretical, a reaction solely in writing. “Absolute monarchy,” says a French critic, “seemed to exist still intact, social powers still seemed to hold themselves upright; only two things were lacking—glory and faith in existing institutions.¹” Glory gone, the institutions that inspired it must necessarily be questioned. But this was not always done in a subversive spirit; the attacks, moreover, arose from a scientific and conservative point of view. Thus Montesquieu wrote his book on “The Spirit of Laws,” intent on conservation and consolidation. (He wished to preserve while ameliorating, and in ameliorating to consolidate.) Things were not attacked from the front, but everything was attacked in turn—which could not have happened in the preceding century. Some there were who wanted nothing but the “legitimate religion of God.” But Catholicism had become incrustated in the body of society, like the portrait of Phidias which could not be detached from the statue of Jupiter without breaking it into pieces. The throne rested on the altar; the king was king only when he was consecrated, the anointed of the Lord. The glory of displaying intelligence prevailed over all else—if anything characterized the French spirit, it was precisely this. “Intelligence is a dignity in the world,” said Madame de La Fayette. “In France it is so much the more necessary as one occupies a more prominent position; the man who has this *esprit* alone, will win out over him who possesses only rank and fortune.” In the eighteenth century, in fact, the majority of men of quality loved their intellect and character better than their rank. With some it went even further: they were possessed with a sincere desire to see clearly, in order to correct abuses—with the love of what they were beginning

¹ There are dead things which seem to live: the absolute monarchy could no longer agree with the higher and more liberal new thought, which was especially democratic. The nobility, the clergy, and the people, had not a single right. The Third Estate was nothing. “What do you wish to be?” was asked. “Everything,” was the answer.

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to call "the public welfare." Literature precipitated all these elements in the same direction, or at least it hastened their course. For literature is never the expression of conventional society. It represents moral and intellectual society—the state of customs and minds. Antiquity, religion, social institutions—these, then, were the three things on which hinged the reaction of the eighteenth century."

The eighteenth century has been entitled "the philosophic century." The writers of the seventeenth century were psychologists, those of the eighteenth were philosophers preoccupied with social life, its laws and institutions. Its masterpieces were no longer tragedies and funeral orations, but studies of legislation and treatises on education. Poetry held a secondary place, and prose which had become precise and rigorous was the instrument of propaganda. Eloquence no longer confined to the pulpit was spread and distributed, not so much orally as in the pamphlet. Philosophy, having broken from tradition and prejudice, became analytic and sensual. There is nothing more typically French than the literature of the seventeenth century; that of the eighteenth was no longer exclusively French, for French thought became less profound and less concentrated. France decentralized itself and received new ideas, first from England, then from Germany. Voltaire was the first to reveal English genius and culture, just as later Madame de Staël revealed the German.

English comedies of a moralizing tenor were being written by Cibber, Steel, Susanna Centlivre; and during Queen Anne's reign there began to appear those weekly publications whose influence was felt throughout England and the Continent. In 1709, appeared the *Tatler*, and in 1711, the *Spectator*.¹ Through all these mediums English thought and life became known to the French, when men such as J. J. Rousseau, Voltaire, Maupertuis, Montesquieu, Prévost, Destouches, went to live in England. Such writers as Marivaux, Piron, Louis Racine (who translated Milton), d'Argenson, de la Chaussée, Du Bocceage, and Letourneur were occupied with English

¹ The *Spectator* comprised 555 numbers, of which many were written by Addison and Steele. Addison wrote the "Sir Roger de Coverley" papers, and "killed that gentleman in No. 517, so that nobody else might murder him."

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literature by translating or imitating it. In this manner arose a healthful middle class and moral element was injected into the literature of France, forming a counter current to the corruption of the times, and tending to improvement and reform. The writers of the seventeenth century were grouped around the king and confined to his dictum. In the eighteenth century, the court was no longer the center of attention and ambition, but the approbation of the public was sought after. The society of men of letters was greatly developed, and the number of second-rate writers was especially multiplied.

Women played a peculiar rôle in this society of letters. During the reign of Louis XIV, Madame de Sévigné, Madame de La Fayette, and other brilliant women saw disappear before them the precedence which had been accorded them as leaders of the literary world, during the reign of the *Précieuses* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. They were no longer at the head of the society of letters; but in the eighteenth century this rôle was again possible, and the salons of the ladies became the great centers for the writers of the time.

The theological and literary quarrels under Louis XIV were succeeded by social and philosophical questions. Literature became an instrument of propaganda and philosophical theories. The eighteenth century was, above all, an epoch of combat; the creative talents were succeeded by the destructive talents, which were wittier than powerful; rhetoric replaced eloquence, wit took the place of genius. The writer could rise to power and fame without the favor of the court (a thing impossible in the seventeenth century), and even in open defiance of it; yet at the same time we see the persecution of independent writers by the men in power, who, on the least pretext, sent the offenders to the Bastille. The unexampled subjugation of thought and art during the reign of Louis XIV, necessarily produced a reaction; with his death, there first of all disappeared the reverence for royalty; this accomplished, the political chanson, which had begun to appear during the last ten years of his reign, achieved a vogue it had not known for a hundred years. The mocking songs of the *Chansonnier historique*, collected by Clairambault and Maurepas, are the precursors of the serious political literature of the ensuing decade.

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In spite of the immoral life of Louis XIV, he always preserved a semblance of the proprieties, whereas the Regent and Louis XV flaunted their vices shamelessly, thus encouraging emulation. From all this we perceive that we must keep in mind the depravity of the court, and consequently that of society, as well as the influence of English philosophy, in order to understand the bulk of French literature in the eighteenth century.

Louis XV, the Well-Beloved—third son of Louis, Duke of Burgundy, and great-grandson of Louis XIV—first reigned under the regency of the Duke of Orleans. The regency was signalized by the bankruptcy of Law,¹ and the war against Spain. Louis XV married Marie Leczinska, but he let himself be influenced by his favorites. The Duchesse de Châteauroux and her three sisters of the Nesle-Mailly family were successively his mistresses.² From 1745 to 1764, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour, exercised an unfortunate influence on the king, as also on the government, and contributed to the entanglement of France in the Seven Years' War. She cost France 40,000,000 livres by her prodigalities, which are not excused by the protection she skillfully accorded to the artists and writers of her time.

¹ John Law, born in Edinburgh, a famous financier, controller general of French finances under the regency. He founded the *Banque générale* and formed the Mississippi scheme (Mississippi Bubble), controlling the French territory in America, then called Louisiana, to pay off the national debt of France. This company he united with the East India and China Companies later known as the *Compagnie des Indes*. Law's schemes resulted in a great financial panic in 1720.

² In 1232 Eustache de St. Pol, wife of a lord of Bruges, presented the tower of Nesle to Saint Louis (Louis IX), who ceded it to his mother, Blanche of Castille. The pious queen could not perceive its destiny. Philippe the Long bought it in 1308 from Amaury de Nesle for 5,000 livres. The State built the tower, situated on the left bank of the Seine, in order to defend the river, the property at that time belonging to the family of Nesle. Some time after, Philip sent thither his wife, Jeanne de Bourgogne, to punish her for certain misdeeds. The tower furnished Alexandre Dumas the title for a celebrated drama, *La Tour de Nesle*, in which Marguerite de Bourgogne, wife of Louis le Hutin, infamous for her crimes, plays the principal rôle. The mausoleum of Mazarin was erected on the site three centuries later.

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Jeanne Bécu, Comtesse du Barry, was the king's favorite after 1768, and her extravagance was also fatal to the people.

Le Livre Rouge (the Red Book)—three large volumes containing a secret register of the private expenses of Louis XV and XVI, and still extant in the National Library at Paris—mentions the expenditure of 228,000,000 livres from May 19, 1774 to August 16, 1789. The memoranda of cash disbursements show that 860,000,000 livres were expended, for pensions and otherwise, without legal authority or warrant. But, more extraordinary still, is the disclosure that Madame du Barry enjoyed credit in the Red Book, by favor of her royal lover, not only for herself, but for her kinsmen and *protégés*. In the first place, she is listed personally for 500,000 francs, paid by order of Louis XVI. She enjoyed, besides, an allowance of 300,000 francs quarterly. Then appears a pension of 80,000 francs for her husband; another of 150,000 livres for her brother-in-law, and a sum of about 1,000,000 écus for her friend the Duchess of Polignac's family. After the publication of the Red Book—so called because the entries were made in red ink—Mirabeau exclaimed: 1,000 écus to the family of d'Assas,¹ for saving the State, 1,000,000 to the family of Polignac for having sent it to perdition! "

So the favorites reigned, while Louis XV struck at the Jesuits and the *Parlements*—the two most solid supports of the monarchy. But by the side of all this corruption that spread to the very steps of the throne, the philosophers of the eighteenth century, through their writings, brought about a reaction against the abuses of the time: Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, the Encyclopedists, and the Physiocrats (economists) created a powerful current of opinion, while Franklin, Galvani, Lavoisier, Linné, Buffon, Jussien, directed the sciences into new paths.

¹ Tradition has it that the Chevalier d'Assas' famous cry: "A moi! Auvergne! (the name of the regiment in which he was captain) voilà les ennemis!" saved France from the enemy in October, 1760, while it caused his death.

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THE SALONS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

During the last ten years of the reign of Louis XIV, when he withdrew from pleasure to lead a life of piety, and thus lost touch with the intellectual movement, society retrieved itself. From the débris of the court the salons were formed; and in the eighteenth century these became a power through which writers exercised their influence upon society. The Cour de Sceaux expressed the need of amusement that was felt during the last ten years of the king's life; the Duchesse du Maine, granddaughter of the great Condé, made of her château de Sceaux a sort of Versailles in miniature. While the king's reign closed sadly amid public misfortunes and private sorrows, at the court of Sceaux there was only laughter and amusement. The duchess was witty and learned; she played comedy, bethought herself of some amusement every hour, and turned night into day. She instituted an order of knighthood called *Mouche à miel*, and presided at feasts belonging to a series under the name of the *Grandes nuits de Sceaux*. Mademoiselle de Launay, one of her ladies in waiting, who suffered much from her caprices, wrote the *Mémoires* of those times in a very entertaining manner.

The great salons of the eighteenth century were those where literature, science, philosophy, religion, and politics were the subjects of discussion and conversation. "There could be no more interesting history than that of the celebrated women of the eighteenth century," said Goethe. The first salon in order of time is that of Anna Theresa, Marquise de Lambert—author of works on education. She says: "We teach women to please, whereas we should teach them to think"; and she contended that men in general abuse their strength. The Marquise in a measure took up the work of Madame de Rambouillet in aiming to improve morals and manners. For forty years she held receptions in her apartment of the Palais Mazarin. The Marquis de Valincourt, The Président Hénault, The Comte de Saint-Aulaire, The Abbé de Choisy, The Marquis d'Argenson, Antoine Houdar de La Motte, the oracle of her salon, Montesquieu, Marivaux, Terrasson, Fontenelle, and many other notables frequented her salon. As at the Hôtel de Rambouillet men of letters, actors,

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and actresses intermingled with the aristocrats. This the famous actress Adrienne Lecouvreur mentions in her letters published in 1892.

The second salon to be established was presided over by the Marquise de Tencin, sister of the Cardinal de Tencin, Archbishop of Lyons, and mother of d'Alembert. She used to say: "Man should gain friends among women; for through women one can do whatever one wishes with man."

The salon of Marie Therèse Rodet Geoffrin was conducted with great ability. Through her liberalities she gathered about her a little world which considered her as its Providence. Distinguished foreigners admitted to its circles testified to the sentiments of gratitude and affection which she inspired; but her indulgence never degenerated into weakness. Lord Walpole called Madame Geoffrin "Common Sense." Stanislaus Poniatowski held her in great esteem, and when he became King of Poland, he entertained her royally at his court. She supported the Encyclopedists, but in spite of her intimate relations with the philosophers, she was very devout. The habitués of her salon included but one woman—Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, for whom d'Alembert felt something more than friendship, despite her lack of beauty. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse herself opened a salon after her breaking off with Madame du Deffand with whom she lived for ten years at the convent of St. Joseph at Paris. Marmontel has characterized her thus: "An astonishing compound of propriety, of reason, of wisdom with the most lively mind, the most ardent soul, the most inflammable imagination."

Marie de Vichy Chamrond, Marquise du Deffand, was one of the most celebrated women of the eighteenth century. After a turbulent life in Paris and at the court of Sceaux, Madame du Deffand retired to the convent of St. Joseph, but taking with her the great society of the epoch, the scholars, writers, grand lords and ladies. La Harpe said of her: "It would be difficult for one to have less sensibility and more egotism." She herself said: "I have never been able to love anything." To one of her best male friends she remarked: "There has never been a cloud in our relations with each other." Which prompted her friend to explain: "That is doubtless because we do not love each other." This friend died, and Madame du

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Deffand went to dine in company with her associates. "He died this evening at six o'clock," she said, "otherwise you would not see me here." Then she ate a very hearty dinner, for she was something of a gourmande. Indeed, Voltaire often cautioned her, "Do not eat too much." To him she confessed: "I fear two things—bodily pain and mental ennui." It was Madame du Deffand who, alluding to the epigrammatic form of certain chapters of the "*Spirit of Laws*" (*L'Esprit des Loix*) of Montesquieu, said that it was "de l'esprit sur les lois."¹ Her correspondence with the greatest minds of her time—Voltaire, Horace Walpole, Hénault, and Montesquieu—is full of interest, and bears witness to the soundness of her judgment.

Louise Florence d'Epinay married at the age of nineteen de La Live de Bellegarde, a gambler and a debauchee who, according to Diderot, ran through two millions without saying a good word or doing a good deed. Forsaken by him, she found consolation among the literary reunions of her salon frequented by Duclos, d'Holbach, Grimm who wrote of her in his famous *Correspondance*, J. J. Rousseau whose benefactress she was and for whom she built the "Ermitage" in her park of La Chevrette. Voltaire called her an eagle in a cage of gauze. She published some interesting *Mémoires*.

Mademoiselle Guinault's salon was enlivened by her talent as a skillful conversationalist, but her tone was very free, and her philosophy savored of atheism. This afforded an opportunity for a sally by J. J. Rousseau. He arose to take leave, saying: "If it is cowardly to speak ill of an absent friend, it is a crime to permit anyone to say anything evil of one's God, who is present." Madame de Simiane, granddaughter of Madame de Sévigné, has left us some charming letters descriptive of high society in those days.

Paul Henri Dietrich, Baron d'Holbach (a German), and Claude Arien Helvetius, both entertained that society in which the tone of materialism dominated. Both were of the Mæcenas type, and were patrons of men of letters. D'Holbach, a philanthropist, was honored by J. J. Rousseau, who transferred him, as Wolmar, to the pages of *Julie, ou la*

¹ Witticisms concerning laws.

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Nouvelle Héloïse. D'Holbach was a collaborator of the *Encyclopédie*, and wrote a book, *Le Système de la Nature ou des Lois du monde physique et du monde moral*, directed chiefly against the idea of God. He was the father of all the philosophy and of all the antireligious polemics of the eighteenth century. D'Holbach gave two dinners a week, and, because of the good cheer always in evidence in his house, he received from the Abbé Galiani the cognomen of "First Steward of Philosophy."

Claude Adrien Helvetius wrote a book entitled *De l'esprit*, which was a manual of materialistic philosophy, and, according to Madame du Deffand, "told the secret of the world." In this book man is reduced to the level of the brute, so that even Voltaire was terrified, and disavowed these doctrines. Julien de La Mettrie,¹ a physician, surpassed the materialistic teachings of d'Holbach and Helvetius, in his works *L'Homme machine* and *L'Homme plante*. Frederick the Great called him to the Royal Academy at Berlin. He was very rich and very charitable, paying pensions to many poor literary men—in particular to Marivaux. Being reproached for frequently assisting unworthy persons, he replied: "If I were king, I would correct them. As I am only rich, I must assist them."

Madame Helvetius, a beautiful, witty, and very charitable woman, continued her salon at her house in Auteuil after her husband's death. The great celebrities of the day, among them Benjamin Franklin during his stay in Paris, frequented this salon which became the first Society of Auteuil.

The last salon of this century was that of Madame Necker, a Swiss lady, the mother of Madame de Staël, and at one time engaged to marry the famous English historian, Gibbon. The frequenters of this salon included Marmontel, Diderot, Buffon, and La Harpe. Madame Necker was very charitable; she founded the Hôpital Necker, which she administered during ten years.

Finally, in this brief catalogue of the brilliant women of the salons, was Madame Roland—Jeanne Manon Phlipon Roland de la Platière, daughter of an engraver—a woman of high

¹ Adolph Menzel put La Mettrie in his celebrated painting of Frederick's round table—on which were served the famous suppers of "*Sans-Souci*."

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intelligence and great goodness, with a passion for literature and arts. The reading of Rousseau's works greatly influenced her imagination. A republican and stoic, the political influence of her celebrated salon was considerable. There the Girondins were most frequently seen; she was almost the muse of the party. When her husband, M. Roland de la Platière, an estimable economist, was called to the Legislative Assembly, and then to the Ministry of the Interior with the Girondin party, Madame Roland became his secretary, or, rather, his inspiration. The majority of the reports and circulars which he signed were written by her—among others, a very vivacious letter addressed to Louis XVI, which caused a great stir and brought about the fall of the ministry. It was at her home also that the Girondins met to draw up their resolutions. When the party was proscribed on May 31, 1793, Roland succeeded in escaping, but his wife was arrested. It was during the enforced leisure of prison life that she began to trace in her *Mémoires* the story of her childhood and her youth, with as much serenity as if she were not on the eve of death upon the scaffold. When she perceived that she would not have time to recount everything with minute detail, she contented herself with drawing the portraits of the principal politicians whom she had known, and with depicting the revolutionary scenes in which she had been thrown. It was all written in a firm style, without hesitation or weakness. The letters to Buzot, also written in prison, are of an admirable lyric eloquence. She went to the scaffold all undaunted, saying only these few words of farewell which posterity has cherished: "O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!" Her husband, who was at Rouen, killed himself on hearing of his wife's death. Madame Roland remains one of the distinguished personalities and intellects of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER XIX

VOLTAIRE

THE most brilliant, influential, and infinitely versatile of all the French writers was Voltaire, whose real name was François-Marie Arouet, born at Paris in 1694. He was the very personification of the French mind and although not a professed philosopher, he acted more powerfully on the trend of thought of his epoch than any of the philosophers. Voltaire studied with the Jesuits at the Louis le Grand College; his professors predicted that he would some day be the highest authority of theism. He frequented at an early age the society that was the most brilliant, as it was also the most licentious in Paris—the society of the Duc de Sully, the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Vendôme, the Marquis de la Fare, the Abbé de Chaulieu. He was introduced to it by the Abbé de Châteauneuf, his godfather, and the friend of Ninon de L'Enclos. The Abbé had presented him to her when Voltaire was only a child of thirteen, and Ninon was eighty-five years old; at her death she left the boy two thousand francs with which to buy books.

Anne—called Ninon—de L'Enclos was born at Paris of noble parents. Her mother wished to make her a nun; her father, a man of intelligence and given to pleasure, succeeded in making her an Epicurean. Ninon lost her parents at the age of fifteen years, and practically educated herself. She was celebrated for her intelligence, her wit, her philosophy, her music, her dancing, and singing. Flighty in love, constant in friendship, scrupulously honest in her worldly relations, of an even temperament, charming deportment, faithful in character, suited both to lead young people and to fascinate them, intellectual without being *précieuse*, and—besides all this—very beautiful, she “thought in the manner of Socrates and acted like Laïs.” Her reputation for inconstancy and

gallantry did not prevent her from having illustrious friends. The Coligni, the Villarceaux, the Sévigné families, the great Condé, and many others—all admired her. Moreover, she was sought after by the most lovable and respectable women of her time. Madame de Maintenon wanted her to become a nun, and repair to Versailles in order to console her for the tedium of its grandeur and her old age; but Ninon preferred her voluptuous obscurity to brilliant slavery. Her home was the rendezvous of the most polished circle of the court and city, and the most illustrious personages of the republic of letters. Scarron consulted her about his novels, Saint-Évremond on his verses, Molière on his comedies, Fontenelle on his Dialogues. At the age of eighty years she had not lost the art of inspiring love, and she died at ninety. She left two children, one of whom died a naval officer. The other son, not knowing that she was his mother, fell in love with her; but when he discovered the secret of his birth, he stabbed himself in despair.

Voltaire, in a letter about Ninon de L'Enclos, wrote:

I shall first tell you, as an accurate historiographer, that the Cardinal de Richelieu was her first admirer. A quarrel between two of her lovers was the cause of a suggestion to the queen that she be sent to a convent. Ninon answered that she was perfectly willing provided it was a convent of Franciscan friars. When told that her place would be at the *Filles Repenties* (Home for Repentant Girls), she protested that she was neither *fille* (maiden) nor repentant. Ninon had too many friends and her company was too agreeable for such punitive measures to prevail, and finally the queen let her live as she wished. Huyghens, the Dutch philosopher, who discovered the first satellite of Saturn while in France, was among those in love with her. She soon developed a philosophical turn of mind, and they gave her the name of the modern Leontium. Her philosophy was veritable, firm, invariable; and above prejudice and frivolous research. Saint-Évremond wrote beneath her picture the best known of all his verses:

L'indulgente et sage nature
A formé l'âme de Ninon
De la volupté d'Épicure
Et de la vertu de Caton.¹

¹ Indulgent and wise nature has formed Ninon's soul with the voluptuousness of Epicurus and the virtue of Cato.

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The grace of her intellect and the soundness of her sentiment lent her such a reputation that when Queen Christina came to France, in 1654, she paid her the honor of going to see her in a little country-house where Ninon lived at the time. Ninon's home was indeed a kind of little Hôtel de Rambouillet, only the people of her circle spoke more naturally and were more interested in philosophy. Mothers took pains to intrust her with the tuition of young people who wished to enter society with approval; and it was her pleasure to educate them. When Ninon was told that Rémond, the introducer of ambassadors, boasted everywhere of having been trained by her, she answered that, "like the Creator, she repented having made the man," and added:

De Monsieur Rémond voici le portrait:
Il a tout-à-fait l'air d'un hareng sorét;
Il rime, il cabale;
Est homme de cour,
Se croit un Candale,¹
Se dit un Saucour.²
Il passe en Science
Socrate et Platon;
Ce pendant il danse
Tout comme Ballon.³
De Monsieur Rémond voici le portrait;
Il a tout-à-fait l'air d'un hareng sorét.⁴

Voltaire concludes his letter thus: "Say with me a little De Profundis for her."

Voltaire wrote verses early in life. His father, treasurer of the Chamber of Accounts, had destined him for the magistracy, and, horrified at seeing him occupied with tragedy, sent him to the Marquis of Châteauneuf, French ambassador to

¹ The Duc de Candale, son of the Duc d'Épernon, the handsomest man of his time.

² The Marquis de Saucour passed for the most rigorous man of his day, and his fame became proverbial.

³ A noted dancer.

⁴ This is the portrait of Monsieur Rémond: he has quite the air of a smoked herring. He rhymes, he plots; a courtier, he thinks himself a Candale, he calls himself a Saucour. He surpasses Socrates and Plato in science; meanwhile he dances like Ballon. This is the portrait of Monsieur Rémond; he has quite the air of a smoked herring.

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Holland, intending that he should enter a solicitor's office on his return home. Voltaire did not stay long, but he soon knew more serious and more salutary disgrace; he was falsely accused of being the author of a satire against Louis XIV, which ended with this verse:

J'ai vu ces maux, et je n'ai pas vingt ans. ¹

Voltaire was then almost twenty; this seemed to the police sufficient proof of his guilt, and he was shut up in the Bastille. The regent, the Duc d'Orléans, aware of his innocence, set him free and gave him a gratuity. It was upon his release from the Bastille that his tragedy, *Œdipe*, was played in 1718. According to some authorities, he then took the name of Voltaire from a little family estate belonging to his mother, Marie Catherine Daumard, a noblewoman from Poitou; he took it in conformity with the usage then general among the bourgeoisie.² Voltaire was sent a second time to the Bastille—a victim not only of the arbitrary will of the government, but of the cowardice of a great lord. The Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot, while dining one day at the home of the Duc de Sully, and being displeased that Voltaire was not of his opinion, said: "Who is that little gentleman who talks so loud?" "He is a man," answered Voltaire, "who does not bear a great name, but who honors the one he does bear." The Chevalier de Rohan, greatly irritated, left the table. A few days afterwards, Voltaire, being again at dinner with the Duc de Sully, was waylaid by the Chevalier's men who struck him over the shoulders repeatedly with a stick. Voltaire took fencing lessons, and then insulted the Chevalier, who accepted the challenge and fixed the rendezvous; but instead of appearing there, he had Voltaire arrested, and confined in the Bastille. Voltaire stayed there only two weeks; but he was given his freedom only on condition that he should go to England where he remained three years until 1729. England gave him a warm welcome. The guest of Lord Bolingbroke,³

¹ I have seen these ills, and I am not twenty.

² Other authorities say that he derived "Voltaire" from an anagram (Arouet l (e) (j) eune), after his release from the Bastille.

³ Voltaire had known him in France, at the time of Bolingbroke's brief service in the cause of the Pretender.

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of Lord Peterborough, and of the rich merchant Falkener, he made friends with Clarke, Gay, Pope, Swift, Congreve, and Johnson. He came to know English literature and English conditions; to perceive the high esteem in which writers were held; to appreciate the value of religious freedom, of justice, and of the courts. It was in England that he developed and enriched his literary genius. He read "Paradise Lost"; he was inspired by the dramatic masterpieces of Shakespeare; he studied the philosophy of Bacon and of Locke, and acquainted himself with the scientific discoveries of Newton; he witnessed the spectacle of liberty developing in every direction—not only in books, but in the theater and the pulpit, in the newspapers and in the courts of law. This sojourn in England was of vital importance in the life of Voltaire. English literature during the time of the Stuarts was confined to an imitation of the French; but from 1688, under the influence of Locke, there was a change, and it is to England that we must look for the origin of the French philosophical impulse of the eighteenth century. From England Montesquieu brought his politics, Condillac his philosophy of sensualism, Voltaire his philosophical ideas and his innovations for the theater. Voltaire's enthusiasm for these scientific and literary marvels, and his admiration for this country of tolerance and liberty, exercised a lasting influence. "There is almost no work of Voltaire," says M. Villemain, "in which the mark of these three years in London cannot be found." It was there that Voltaire published a new edition of *La Ligue*, under the new title of *La Henriade*—a poem "which breathes throughout his tolerance and his love of humanity, his hatred of war and fanaticism."¹

On returning to France, Voltaire found again the same arbitrary government and the persecutions inspired by religious intolerance. The tragedy of *La Mort de César* could not be printed because the author voiced republican sentiments in the work; and his elegy on the death of Mademoiselle

¹ The subject of *La Henriade*, to quote Voltaire himself, is "the siege of Paris, begun by Henri de Valois and Henri le Grand, and completed by the latter alone. The scene is laid no farther than from Paris to Ivry, where was fought the famous battle which decided the fate of France and the royal house."

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Lecouvreur, the celebrated actress, in which he opposed the prejudice that deprived actors of Christian burial, drew upon him a persecution that forced him to leave the capital and seek refuge at Rouen. This elegy reads:

Ah! verrai-je toujours ma faible nation,
Incertaine en ses vœux, flétrir ce qu'elle admire;
Nos mœurs avec nos lois toujours se contredire,
Et le Français volage endormi sous l'empire
De la superstition?
Quoi! n'est-ce donc qu'en Angleterre
Que les mortels osent penser? ¹

At Rouen Voltaire secretly published his *Histoire de Charles XII*, and his *Lettres Philosophiques sur les Anglais*, wherein he undertook to make France understand England—its religion, sects, government; its philosophy as expounded by Shakespeare, Pope, Swift, and the rest. The *Lettres Philosophiques* were suppressed by a decree of the Council. The “Parliament” ordered the book to be burned by the hangman and the keeper of the seals proscribed the author, who, warned in time, went into exile once more until he obtained permission to return to Paris. He withdrew into Lorraine, to the château of Cirey, with his friend the Marquise du Châlet (1735). The Marquise was of a serious mind, and of great charm and intelligence; during the fifteen years of her influence she inspired him to his best works: *Alzire*, *Mahomet*, *Mérobe*, *Sémiramis*, *l'Enfant prodigue*, *Babouc*, *Micromégas*, and *Zadig*. It was in this retirement that he composed the *Éléments de la Philosophie de Newton*. This work, in the course of a few years, dethroned the official philosophers of France and Germany, Descartes and Leibnitz. The publication of the *Epître à Madame du Châtelet* on the philosophy of Newton raised a new storm. There is some difficulty in explaining this when we read these verses:

¹ Ah! shall I always see my weak nation, uncertain in her wishes, condemn what she admires; our customs always at odds with our laws, and the volatile French asleep under the empire of superstition? What! Is it, then, but in England that mortals dare think?

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Dieu parle et le chaos se dissipe à sa voix :
 Vers un centre commun tout gravit à la fois ;
 Ce ressort si puissant, l'âme de la nature,
 Était enseveli dans une nuit obscure ;
 Le compas de Newton, mesurant l'univers,
 Lève enfin ce grand voile, et les cieux sont ouverts ;
 Il déploie à mes yeux, par une main savante,
 De l'astre des saisons la robe étincelante :
 L'émeraude, l'azur, le pourpre, le rubis,
 Sont l'immortel tissu dont brillent ses habits.
 Chacun de ses rayons dans sa substance pure,
 Porte en soi les couleurs dont se peint la nature ;
 Et, confondus ensemble, ils éclairent nos yeux ;
 Ils animent le monde, ils emplissent les cieux ;
 Confidants du Très-Haut, substances éternelles,
 Qui brûlez de ses feux, qui couvrez de vos ailes
 Le trône où votre maître est assis parmi vous,
 Parlez : du grand Newton n'étiez vous point jaloux ? ¹

In *Candide, ou l'optimisme*, his most important philosophical novel, Voltaire made sport of the famous maxim of the optimist Leibnitz: "Everything is for the best in the best of possible worlds." The tragedy *Mahomet* was staged at Lille; but Cardinal de Fleury opposed its representation at Paris. Voltaire dedicated his play to Pope Benedict XIV, who received it favorably and sent his blessing to the poet. In this same retirement, Voltaire finished his *Discours sur l'Homme*, which is considered one of the most beautiful monuments of French poetry. He composed also the *Histoire de Charles XII* which to this day is very popular. It reads

¹ God speaks and chaos dissolves at His voice: all gravitates at once toward a common center. This powerful spring, the soul of Nature, was engulfed in night obscure. The compass of Newton, measuring the universe, at last raises this great curtain, and the heavens are opened; there spreads before my eyes, by a wise hand, the sparkling robe of the orb of the seasons; emerald, azure, purple, ruby, are the immortal tissue of its brilliant garments. Each ray in its pure substance carries the colors with which Nature paints herself; mingled together they give light to our eyes, they animate the world, they fill the heavens. Confidants of the Most High, eternal substances, that burn with His fires, that cover with your wings the throne upon which your master is seated among you, speak: Were you not jealous of the great Newton?

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more like a richly colored novel of adventure than a strictly truthful history of the life of Charles, although written with a strict regard to facts. Its portrayal is fascinating, and the political views of the author are penetrating, making it a model of historical narrative, just as his *Siècle de Louis XIV* is a model of political history, and his *Essai sur les mœurs*, of philosophical history.

It was at this time that Voltaire entered into relations with the Prince Royal of Prussia, and kept up with him a curious correspondence. This connection with Frederick procured for him a diplomatic mission to the court of the King of Prussia. The pretext which he made, in order to conceal the purpose of his journey, was his desire to escape the persecutions which Boyer had incited against him. When Boyer complained to the king that Voltaire made him appear as a fool, the king answered, "That is a settled fact."

On his return to Paris, Voltaire was elected a member of the Academy, but his enemies again succeeded in driving him away. He left Paris anew for Cirey, whence he betook himself to the court of Stanislas Leczinski, father-in-law of Louis XV. who had summoned him. After passing some time at Sceaux with the Duchesse du Maine, he went to Berlin to be with Frederick, the *Salomon du Nord*, as Voltaire named him,¹ who received him in Potsdam not as a poet, but as a king. He was given a splendid apartment in the palace, a sumptuous table and fine equipages, and he received the title of chamberlain and a pension of twenty thousand francs. In return the poet corrected the king's verses, and delighted him at supper by the grace and prolificness of his wit and intellect. Such men as Maupertuis, La Baumelle, La Mettrie, le marquis d'Argens, were gathered at the round table of the famous suppers of Frederick, under whose presidency morals, philosophy, and history were discussed. The first days were full of enchantment for Voltaire: "One hundred and fifty thousand victorious soldiers, no lawyers, opera, comedy, philosophy, poetry, a hero philosopher and poet, grandeur and graces, grenadiers and muses, trumpets and violins, repasts of Plato, society and liberty; who would believe it? It is

¹ He called Catherine of Russia "Semiramis."

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all true." For Voltaire this was the Palace of Alcina; but the enchantment was brief. Maupertuis, the life president of the Academy of Berlin, who was jealous of this French genius, and had become his enemy, set to work to embroil the king and the philosopher. Voltaire, in turn, pilloried him in his *Diatribes du Docteur Akakia, médecin du Pape*; but Frederick, having caused the pamphlet to be burned by the hand of the executioner, Voltaire, outraged, sent back to the king his cross, his key, and the certificate of his pension, and requested permission to depart, which he finally obtained, promising the king that he would return. At Frankfort he found an agent of Frederick who had been ordered to recover the collection of the king's poetic works, which Voltaire was supposed to have taken away with him; and this emissary kept him closely guarded in a tavern, for three weeks, until he should restore the precious package which, as a matter of fact, he had left behind him in his bags. Later an amicable correspondence was reëstablished between the king and the philosopher; and it was the former who made the first advances. Voltaire's fame, contested up to the time of his intimacy with the King of Prussia, soon equalled a sovereign's after his return to France.

Voltaire had several homes—one, on Genevan territory, a winter house at Montrion, near Ouchy; a mansion at Lausanne, rue du Grand-Chêne, and, finally, two estates in France, in the immediate neighborhood of the frontier of Geneva, one at Tournay, the other—a quasi-royal residence—at Ferney. "All these dwellings," he wrote to d'Alembert, "are necessary for me. I am delighted with passing freely from one frontier to the other; were I only French, I would depend too much on France. As it is, I have an odd little kingdom in a Swiss valley. I am like the Old Man of the Mountain: with my four estates I am, so to speak, on my four paws. Montrion is my little cabin, my winter palace and shelter from the cruel north wind. Then I have arranged a house at Lausanne; it might be called the Italian palace. Judge of it: fifteen windows look out on the lake—on the right, on the left, and in front; a hundred gardens are below my garden, bathed in the blue mirror of the lake. I see all Savoy across this little sea, and, beyond Savoy, the Alps rising in an am-

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phitheater on which the sun's rays form a thousand effects of light . . . I should like to keep you in this delicious place. There is no more beautiful aspect in the world; the Point of the Seraglio in Constantinople has no lovelier view." When Voltaire went to install himself in his château of Les Délices, he expressed the sentiments which this sojourn inspired in him, in a poem which is a sort of hymn to Liberty, and is certainly one of the most beautiful that came from his pen. After living for some time in Les Délices, Voltaire settled definitely at Ferney in 1758, and it is there that he passed the last twenty years of his life. His intellectual influence was enormous: Ferney was the literary capital of Europe during the twenty years of his sojourn there. He developed a great energy: he corresponded with all the crowned heads of Europe, with ministers and with the learned, and made himself felt as philosopher, poet, historian, and defender of the oppressed. All the world wished to see this king of literature: philosophers, actors, princes and peasants, priests and laymen, came hither to look upon the man who made the world think as well as laugh¹—who had more wit, it is said, than all the people put together. There are several distinct periods in Voltaire's life: in his youth he was a bel-esprit, occupied with the theater and light poetry; during his sojourn at the Château de Cirey he turned to serious subjects, including science; his life with King Frederick of Prussia crowned his celebrity; and at Ferney, Voltaire, all powerful, was himself a king; he made his influence felt throughout the Continent. When he died, Collin d'Harleville said: "Now we shall again have a republic of literary men."

The years which he passed in his retreat at Ferney were extremely fruitful. His prolific mind produced a quantity of poems of the most varied types—satires, epistles, tales, epigrams, commentaries, sparkling philosophic narratives, numerous works of religious polemics, the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, a number of pamphlets directed against his enemies—the enemies of liberty of thought and tolerance. At the same time Voltaire kept up an immense correspondence,

¹ The temple of philosophy at Ermenonville has a column of Voltaire with the inscription: "*Voltaire ridiculum.*"

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and animated with his spirit the *Encyclopédie* which d'Alembert and Diderot were compiling. In this correspondence we find reflected the whole literary economic and moral life of his age. Of his letters,¹ more than twelve thousand, addressed to seven hundred correspondents, and embracing a period of sixty years have been preserved; and these letters, admirably composed, with good sense, elegance, and facility, make of Voltaire one of the greatest of French prose writers. In 1737, he wrote the *Conseils à un Journaliste*, a golden book of instruction for editors and critics. One critic who has called him the "Journalist of all times," remarks that his works if written in our own days would appear in the form of brilliant leading articles or colloquial essays. As a matter of fact, Voltaire as a writer is universal; his output embraces all forms of literature: lyric, epic, dramatic, poems, the novel, philosophical and critical essays, and historical narrations. In his tragedies, of which there are twenty-eight, he widened the field by introducing romantic and national subjects, and by picturing scenes not only in Greece and Rome, but in America, Palestine, and China. He adhered to the "three unities" of classic tradition, but swept aside theatrical conventions by causing the actors to discard their large hats with sweeping plumes, their knee breeches, silk stockings, and buckled gaiters, for costumes appropriate to their parts. In the seventeenth century, romantic love and ambition were the principal themes of tragedy. Voltaire enlarged this meager repertory of motive by making, in *Zulime*, *Sémiramis*, *Brutus*, *l'Orphelin de la Chine*, and *Mérope*, a study of parental affection; a portrayal of Christian sentiment in *Alzire* and *Zaïre*; and a picture of chivalrous emotion in *Tancrède*. As an historian he likewise explored a new field. With Voltaire, history became narrative, literary and philosophical. To historical narrative, he declared, belonged not only the record of exterior circumstances, but that account of the human mind which exhibits man in his ascent from the barbaric state. Voltaire was thus the first historian who recognized that the history of civilization was an authorized factor in the

¹ The most complete collection is to be found in Moland's edition, vols. xxxiii-xlix.

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historical narrative. In all these diverse forms of literature, Voltaire pursued the same aim. Like the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, "He understood the necessity of always repeating the same things in order to impress them on men's minds. But he knew what the good abbé was ignorant of—how essential it is to vary the form; and no one has so greatly excelled in this art." His end was none other than to free humanity from the yoke of superstition and fanaticism. Swept on by his ardor, and irritated by the persecutions to which he exposed himself, he often violated his purpose; but he attained it, too, and, in spite of his errors, or his excesses, his name must be inscribed among the benefactors of humanity. His letters in verse and in prose scintillate with wit and malice; they bring before us the daily life of this man, whose prodigious activity, extending to everything, made him the self-appointed righter of all iniquities, and compelled the reform of the criminal procedures in law when these seemed to him to be tainted with injustice.

The private life of Voltaire bears witness to great beneficence. He made admirable use of his fortune, and his benefactions were distinguished by nobility and delicacy. "We may count Voltaire," said Condorcet, "among the very few men in whom the love of humanity is a veritable passion." But, writes a French critic: "not even Condorcet could quite condone the palpable faults of Voltaire, who completely lacked that cleanness of language and habits without which man always lowers himself—without which there is neither dignity nor true happiness for woman. This was a fault of the age—an age of reaction against the monastic rigor of an ascetic Christianity, and against the hypocrisy of the court of Louis XIV. It was not sufficiently understood in the eighteenth century, that the more they wished to free the spirit and liberate the mind of man, the less they should loosen the bonds of moral convention. Voltaire was, unfortunately, among those who permitted themselves the greatest license in this respect; and his literary style often savors of the levity of his morals."

Few authors have been the object of so much comment by superficial students; and perhaps no other writer has called forth such contradictory criticisms. The praise and

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condemnation of opposing commentators have been alike excessive and superlative. The superficial ones are ready with the judgment that he was a witty writer, with an excellent literary style, but a very bad man. Yet so complex was his nature, so many-sided was this remarkable being, that even those who have studied him exhaustively do not fully understand him. The truth is that Voltaire was something more than an author in the ordinary sense of that term; he was an integral part of the century itself with all its merits and shortcomings.

“Den höchsten unter den Franzosen denkbaren, der Nation gemässesten Schriftsteller,” said Goethe of Voltaire. Again, writing to Eckerman (January 3, 1830), Goethe has spoken of the influence exercised upon his youth by the genius of the great Frenchman, and how he labored to escape it in order to develop his own individuality. Even to this day, the numerous editors of Voltaire's works are divided into two opposing factions; but scan as we may the evidence of the opposition, it is difficult to see how Carlyle could have gone so far astray as to remark that in all of Voltaire he had not found “one grand thought.” The injustice of such a criticism, and its incompatibility with the simple record of Voltaire's labors in behalf of humanity, must be apparent to anyone who recalls his crusade against torture, slavery, judicial oppression, and the evils of a censored press. Here was a man who, all alone, with no other weapons than his intellect and his pen, opposed the terrible abuses rooted for centuries in the proceedings of the French criminal courts, who stirred all Europe with the power and the success of his efforts for reform. Moreover, he made himself felt in other practical affairs. During a time of erratic mercantile restrictions, he was the first to declare for free trade, and to exploit the advantages of a Suez Canal.

It was in 1788, when almost eighty-four years of age, that Voltaire made a trip to Paris to enjoy his glory. His return was a veritable triumph, his entry into Paris that of a victorious king. They tell a story that during his journey, which took place in a rigorous winter, the postmasters wanted to assist his progress themselves; one man, old and infirm, not being able to mount a horse, recommended him to his postilion

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in these words: "Think of the honor which is yours in guiding this great man; there are ten kings in Europe, but there is only one Voltaire on earth." After he had arrived in Paris, Voltaire stopped at the Hôtel de Bernières where the city, the court, the Academy, the philosophers, and artists came to pay tribute to him. "The enthusiasm with which he was received in Paris," says Condorcet, "spread to the common people. They paused before his windows; they passed entire hours there, in the hope of seeing him for a moment; his carriage, forced to advance at a walk, was surrounded by a numerous crowd who blessed him and praised his works. The representation of *Irène*, in spite of the weakness of the tragedy, was the occasion for a new triumph for him. His bust was crowned in the theater with great applause, to the accompaniment of joyful cries, and tears of enthusiasm and tenderness. On his exit people cast themselves at his feet, they kissed his garments. "You want to make me die with pleasure; you smother me beneath roses!" exclaimed Voltaire. The Abbé Duvernet, one of his biographers present at the scene, tells us that the people cried: "Honor to the philosopher who teaches us to think! Glory to the defender of Calas! Glory to the savior of Sirven and Montbailly!"¹ All this proves to what extent Voltaire had influenced public opinion by his attacks on fanaticism. When Voltaire, on coming to Paris, met Benjamin Franklin, the American philosopher presented his grandson to him, asking his blessing. "God and liberty," said Voltaire; "that is the only benediction suitable for the grandson of Mr. Franklin." God and liberty were, moreover, in two words, the sum of Voltaire's philosophy.

Voltaire survived this triumph but a short time. As he had not received the sacraments of the church, his interment in the chapel of a monastery at Scellières, of which his nephew was the Abbé, was accomplished by a kind of fraud. The government, rivaling the clergy in rancor, prohibited the press, which it absolutely controlled at this time, from

¹ Famous cases in which Voltaire was an indefatigable champion of justice miscarried: among the most sensational of which were those of Calas, Sirven, Montbailly, de La Barre, of the Comte de Lally, governor of the French possessions in India, and of the serfs of the Jura Mountains.

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speaking of his death, and the theatrical managers had orders not to play any of his dramas. In the time of the Terror, his remains were exhumed and transferred to the Panthéon with solemn pomp; and to-day he figures in bas-relief on the front of this edifice.

Voltaire was indeed the king of his century; at this time French literature gave tone to all Europe, and Voltaire was the principal representative of that literature. Under his scepter the republic of letters was transformed into a monarchy; and, although tempered by the talents, the specialties, the rivalries of contending interests, it took its general tone from this one man. Never did literature undergo such a royal rule. In his hands, tragedy took on an entirely new character, although it never reached the heights of Corneille or Racine; it became philosophic, moralizing, didactic, and aimed to persuade, without ignoring the art of pleasing. *Zaïre*, the most beautiful tragedy of love that had been written since Racine, is Voltaire's masterpiece—"la pièce enchantresse," as J. J. Rousseau called it.

ZAÏRE

The argument of *Zaïre* is as follows: It is the time of the crusades. Saladin has dethroned the last of the Lusignans, and recaptured the Holy Land from the Christians. Orosmane, one of his successors, reigns in Jerusalem; but he is a sultan who loves progress, and who wants to be loved for himself by his subjects, by the Christians, and especially by *Zaïre*, a young slave who has been reared in his palace. Lusignan, a prisoner for twenty years, is set free by Orosmane, and recognizes his son in a Christian knight, Nérestan, who has come from France to ransom the captives, together with his daughter, *Zaïre*, who has been educated in Mohammedanism, and is about to marry the sultan. Lusignan is in despair, and utters those famous and beautiful verses which soften the heart of *Zaïre* and make her promise to receive baptism. When Orosmane comes to seek her for the marriage ceremony, she hesitates; he is jealous, suspects something, surprises her at the moment when Nérestan comes to lead her away for baptism, and stabs her. Nérestan explains every-

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thing to him, and Orosmane, in despair, kills himself, after having opened the seraglio and given liberty to all his prisoners.

MÉROPE (LA MÉSSÉNIENNE)

This is the plot of *Méropé*: Cresphonte, King of Messenia, has been assassinated. The assassin, Polyphonte, has been able to keep his crime secret for fifteen years, and seeks to compel Méropé, the widow of Cresphonte, who has remained mistress of the throne, to give him her hand in marriage. But she thinks only of her son, Egisthe, long since missing, who, exposed to the murderers of his father, has been taken secretly away from Messenia by his rescuer. One day a young man, alleged to be the murderer of this child, is brought to Méropé. She wishes to punish him herself; but at the moment when she lifts the dagger to strike, she recognizes him as her son, who denounces the crimes of Polyphonte, and kills him, to the satisfaction of all. The following verses from *Méropé* have become proverbial, and are frequently recalled:

Le premier qui fut roi fut un soldat heureux.¹

Qui sert bien son pays n'a pas besoin d'aïeux.²

Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'espoir,
La vie est un opprobre, et la mort un devoir.³

ALZIRE (L'AMÉRICAINNE)

Alzire is a philosophic tragedy in which there are some very beautiful verses on tolerance. Alzire, daughter of the Peruvian chief, Montèze, is, like her father, a convert to Christianity. She is pledged to wed Zamore—descended, like herself, from the kings of Peru; but in Zamore's absence the Spanish governor, Don Gusman, asks for her hand. Alzire, who thinks that Zamore has been killed, yields to the prayers of her father and consents to the marriage; but immediately

¹ The first who was king was a fortunate soldier.

² He who serves his country well has no need of ancestors.

³ When one has lost all, when one hopes no more, life is opprobrious and death a duty.

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after the ceremony, Zamore, who sees in Gusman a fortunate rival, the enemy of his gods and the oppressor of his country, reappears with his warriors. He slays Gusman, who, dying, forgives him, and commits his widow to Zamore's charge.

MAHOMET (L'IMPOSTEUR)

The Mahomet of Voltaire is an ambitious impostor who, in order to elevate himself, imposes upon the credulity of men. He explains to Zopire, chief of Mecca, which he is besieging, his ideas and plans; he promises to do his best for Zopire, and to give him his due share in the great enterprise which he has formed. Zopire answers that he will never consent to be the accomplice of an impostor, and the struggle between the two men begins. Mahomet believes himself lost unless Zopire is put out of the way, and seeks to have him assassinated. He has taken into his camp Zopire's two children, Seïde and Palmire, whom Zopire has for a long time believed to be dead. These children, not knowing that they are brother and sister, have fallen in love with each other. Mahomet orders Seïde to kill Zopire when Zopire offers sacrifices to his gods. Seïde consents; but at the moment when Zopire has been wounded, he recognizes his children. Seïde, horrified at his own action and at that of Mahomet, wishes to denounce him before the assembled people; but Mahomet has him poisoned, and when Seïde accuses him of imposture, Mahomet exclaims, "Thou has blasphemed against the prophet of God; thou shalt die!" Having been poisoned, Seïde does indeed die before the eyes of the people, who continue devoted to Mahomet. This is the play which Voltaire dedicated to Pope Benedict XIV. We cite a familiar couplet from this play:

Les mortels sont égaux, ce n'est point la naissance;
C'est la seule vertu qui fait leur différence.¹

Voltaire's other tragedies include *La Mort de César*, borrowed from Shakespeare; *Sémiramis*; *Oreste*; *Tancrède*,

¹ Mortals are equal; it is not birth—it is only virtue that differentiates them.

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borrowed from Ariosto. Among his comedies are: *Nanine*; *l'Écossaise*.

The most important of Voltaire's compositions is his *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIV*. Of his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, Voltaire says: "It is not only the life of the prince which I am describing, it is not only the annals of his reign; it is rather the history of the human mind, drawn from the most glorious century of intellectual life." Among his novels and prose tales are *Zadig*, *Candide*, *L'Ingénu*, *La Princesse de Babylone*, *l'Homme aux Quarante Ecus*. In the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* is condensed all his philosophic thought. His poems include *Le Désastre de Lisbonne*, the satires, and *La Pucelle*, a burlesque epic on Jeanne d'Arc, which caused him much tribulation during his lifetime. Some of his countrymen never forgave him this offense against their national heroine. Voltaire pointedly made sport of her, whereas the German poet, Schiller, glorified her and made her appear as a divine being. In our day, Anatole France treats Joan of Arc in his usual skeptical way, while Andrew Lang, like Schiller, exalts her.

On les persécute, on les tue,
Sauf après un long examen,
A leur dresser une statue,
Pour la gloire du genre humain.¹
(Béranger.)

The following are a few of Voltaire's epigrams:

J'eus été près du Gange esclave des faux dieux—
Chrétienne à Paris, Musulmane en ces lieux.²
(From *Zaire*.)

¹ They are persecuted and killed, but after a long critical examination a statue is erected to them for the glory of the human race. Schiller's prophecy, "Du wirst unsterblich leben," has realized itself: Joan of Arc was beatified by Pope Pius X, in 1909.

² On the Ganges I would have been a slave to false gods—a Christian in Paris, a Musulman in these places.

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Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.¹

Je vous dois tout, puisque c'est moi qui vous aime.²

M. C. Lockwood says: "Popular conceptions of Voltaire are in some respects erroneous. He is regarded as an arch-infidel and the bitter foe of religion. On the contrary, he was always a deist. He never assails the 'Sermon on the Mount,' nor can one who reads him carefully believe that there would not have been a subtle sympathy between him and the best religious minds of later days. He never mocked men who lived good lives, nor opposed with any bitterness those who were the friends of liberty of conscience."

The inscription, "Deo erexit Voltaire,"³ on the church given by him to Ferney is not a sacrilegious jest, but a reproof to those who dedicated churches to the Saints and never to the Deity. Voltaire was in earnest in his Deism because he could not conceive a well-regulated universe without a supreme power; but no religious thought seems to have entered into his conception of God. In his Ode to the author of the book, *De tribus impostoribus*, he says: "Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer."⁴ In his poem to the King of Prussia he wrote:

Nous adorions tous deux le Dieu de l'univers;
Car il en est un, quoi qu'on dise:
Mais nous n'avions pas la sottise
De le déshonorer par des cultes pervers.⁵

Of his *Histoire de Jenni, ou l'Athée et le Sage*, La Harpe says: "It is a little philosophical novel against atheists, and therefore very edifying for good atheists. Finally, Voltaire

¹ To understand all is to forgive all.

² I owe you all, since it is I who love you.

³ "Erected by Voltaire to God."

⁴ "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him."

⁵ We both worshiped the God of the universe;

For there is one, whatever may be said;

But we did not commit the folly

Of dishonoring Him by perverse creeds.

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himself, in his letter—August 4, 1775—to d'Argental, says:
“ I have always regarded atheists as impudent sophists; I
have said it, I have printed it. The author of Jenni cannot be
suspected of thinking like Epicurus. Spinoza himself, admits
a supreme intelligence in nature.”

CHAPTER XX

MONTESQUIEU, BUFFON, AND ROUSSEAU

MONTESQUIEU

CHARLES DE SECONDAT, Baron de Montesquieu et de la Brède, was born in 1689, at the château de la Brède, near Bordeaux, of a noble family. He kept aloof from court favor, and was therefore in a position to write as independently as was possible in those days. Having been offered a payment by grace of the court, he refused it, saying: "N'ayant point fait de bassesses je n'avais pas besoin d'être consolé par des grâces." (Having committed no base act, I did not need the consolation of favors.) But he was far from being indifferent to the prerogatives of his birth and to the privileges attached to his manorial possessions; and all this was made apparent in the development of his ideas.

The Baron de Montesquieu was the apostle of political liberty. Destined for the law, to which profession his family belonged, he gave himself up to the study of jurisprudence at a very early age—relieving the monotony of it by reading books of history and travel and the works of ancient writers. The first subject on which Montesquieu exercised his pen was the thesis that the idolatry of the pagans did not deserve eternal damnation. He was thus—at the age of twenty—already manifesting his attachment for the ancients and his hatred of religious intolerance, and, at the same time, his critical spirit. But this essay he did not consider worthy of publication.

Having been admitted to the Parlement of Bordeaux in 1714, he soon succeeded his uncle as the *président à mortier*.¹

¹ *Mortier*, formerly a round cap of black velvet, laced with gold and with a crown in the form of a mortar-board, worn by the presidents of such

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He employed the leisure time which his office permitted him in studying moral, political, and historical sciences. He read a dissertation in the Académie de Bordeaux, of which he was the founder, on the "Policy of the Romans in Religion"—which was, as it were, the prelude of his great work.

The principal result of his leisure was the *Lettres persanes*. This is the imaginary correspondence of three Persians, Rica, Usbek, and Rhédi, who go to Europe to study its customs and its institutions. Rhédi tarries in Venice, while Rica and Usbek repair to Paris. From the time of their departure an active correspondence is carried on between Usbek, his concubines, Zachi, Zéphus, Fatimé, Roxane, Zelis, and their eunuchs; and between the three travelers and their friends at Ispahan. Very soon discord breaks out in the seraglio of Usbek: the eunuchs endeavor to right matters; one of the favorites, Roxane, poisons herself after addressing some ironical farewells to the master whom she has deceived.

Montesquieu realized that without the narrative of salacious episodes peculiar to the harem, his *Lettres persanes*, with all their statesmanlike wisdom, would never have attained wide popularity; and he showed his perspicacity by employing these and like incidents in order to get a popular hearing for the serious and mighty ideas which animated his work. In these letters he passes in review, with perfect freedom, the politics, the religion, and the entire society of France. It is a bitter satire of the ridiculous characteristics of European society, in which Montesquieu touches upon the most serious questions of philosophy, politics, and morality. For the most part the Persians, Usbek and Rica, depict the lives and acts of the Oriental despots, and compare them with the French monarchs, whose weaknesses and defects are plainly shown through a thin disguise; but occasionally the author is openly and bitterly satirical, as, for instance, in Letter XXXVII, describing the aged King Louis XIV:

"Le roi de France est vieux. Nous n'avons point d'ex-

assemblies: hence — *président à mortier*. It is nowadays the cap worn by the judges of the *Cour de Cassation* and the *Cour des Comptes*.

emple dans nos histoires d'un monarque qui ait si longtemps régné. On dit qu'il possède à un très-haut degré le talent de se faire obéir : il gouverne avec le même génie sa famille, sa cour, son état. On lui a souvent entendu dire que, de tous les gouvernements du monde, celui des Turcs ou celui de notre auguste sultan lui plairait le mieux ; tant il fait cas de la politique orientale. J'ai étudié son caractère, et j'y ai trouvé des contradictions qu'il m'est impossible de résoudre : par exemple, il a un ministre qui n'a que dix-huit ans, et une maîtresse qui en a quatre-vingts. Il aime à gratifier ceux qui le servent ; mais il paye aussi libéralement les assiduités, ou plutôt l'oisiveté de ses courtisans, que les campagnes laborieuses de ses capitaines : souvent il préfère un homme qui le déshabille, ou qui lui donne la serviette lorsqu'il se met à table, à un autre qui lui prend des villes, ou lui gagne des batailles."¹

In these Letters² Montesquieu's candor is unrestrained ; all the burning questions of politics and society are discussed, without however, being decided. He attacks all questions, not with an angry eloquence, but as an impersonal observer who does not commit himself. He says : " The nature and aim of these letters are so exposed that they will never deceive people save those who wish to deceive themselves." Villemain describes the *Lettres persanes* as " the most profound

¹ "The King of France is old. We have no example in history of a monarch who has reigned so long. It is said that he possesses in a very high degree the talent of enforcing obedience: he governs with the same genius his family, his court, his state. He has often been heard to say that of all the governments of the world that of the Turks or that of our august Sultan would please him best; so much does he think of Oriental politics. I have studied his character, and I have found contradictions impossible for me to solve: for instance, he has a minister eighteen years of age and a mistress who is eighty. He loves to gratify those who serve him; but he rewards as liberally the assiduities or rather the idleness of his courtiers as he does the laborious campaigns of his captains; often he prefers a man who undresses him or one who gives him a napkin when seated at table, to another who takes cities or wins battles for him."

² A few years ago Montesquieu's descendants at last consented to the publication of his manuscripts in the archives of the château de La Brède; and from these Professor Barkhausen of the law faculty in Bordeaux has since written a book: *Montesquieu: ses idées et ses œuvres*.

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of frivolous books." M. Tournoux, in his preface to the Jouaust edition of Montesquieu's works, says it is probable that Montesquieu borrowed some of his ideas in the *Lettres persanes* from the *Spectator* of Addison, and some from the *Amusements sérieux et comiques* of Dufresny. He notes that the *Lettres* were published in Rouen (as were Madame de Sévigné's letters and Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*), and not in Holland, as so often recorded; and that the Holland publication was the second edition, corrected for Cardinal Fleury and supervised by his secretary, the Abbé Duval.¹

Montesquieu's reputation was suddenly established; the *Lettres*, we are told, "sold like bread." The success of the work was so great, and the debate it provoked so prodigious, that, according to what he himself says, the booksellers employed every means to secure a series of similar works. They buttonholed every one they met, saying: "Write me a set of *Lettres persanes*."

Montesquieu's *Temple de Gnide* and *Arsace et Isménie* show traces of that licentiousness characteristic of his contemporaries, which he himself, despite the dignity of his character, did not escape. His *Histoire Véroitable* is a novel that reflects Montesquieu's view of the world: it tells how the servant of an Indian bonze makes use of his master's piety to turn money into his own coffers. He lives in great splendor, but is finally unmasked and becomes a fugitive. As a punishment for his sins, he undergoes successive transmigrations of the soul, assuming, by turns, the form of Apis, the Bull of Memphis worshiped by the Egyptians; of the elephant of the King of Thibet; of a poet, a courtier, a man of the world, a tramp, a gambler, a prestidigitator, a cab horse, a eunuch, a courtesan, etc.

Montesquieu thought himself entitled to a place in the Academy, which in the eighteenth century was considered more important than it is at present. Cardinal Fleury, then prime minister, had not read the *Lettres persanes*; but he took exception to them on the strength of the report that they were an offense to religion and the state. The doors of the Academy were barred to the author, for in the mouth of Rica,

¹ Newest edition by H. Barkhausen, 1900.

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Montesquieu had put the words: There is no tribunal in the world less respected than the Academy. Then Montesquieu resorted to a ruse to gain favor with the minister. He published a new edition of the *Lettres* in which he abridged and modified the doubtful passages, and then himself took his book to the Cardinal who, charmed with the literary style, declared it to be "more agreeable than dangerous." They parted on the best of terms, and Montesquieu was received into the Academy. Shortly afterwards he left France for a voyage into foreign lands, in order to study the laws and the customs of their inhabitants. He first went to Vienna, and was received at the court of the Prince of Savoy, where he found absolute monarchy on another soil; and thence to Hungary, where, as M. Villemain says, he could record the waning expressions of that feudal vigor he so vividly described in a few lines of the *Esprit des lois*. He then passed over to Italy, where he could study various forms of government: at Florence the absolute authority, easily supported, of a Grand Duke; at Venice, the aristocratic republic with its Council of Ten and its mysterious rule; at Rome, the pontificate. Here he was presented to Pope Benedict XIV, who offered him (so the story goes) a life-long dispensation from fasting. Montesquieu, greatly flattered, hastened to accept; but when he saw the bill of expenses connected with the papal document in the case, he returned the papers to the Pope's secretary saying: "Monseigneur, I thank his Holiness for his great kindness; but as he is such an honorable man, I shall depend on his word."

From Italy, Montesquieu went to Switzerland—the country of William Tell, the refuge of liberty, the land of republicanism par excellence; thence to Holland, where he found, in another form, the image of liberty and republican institutions. In Holland he met Lord Chesterfield, who took him on his yacht to London and presented him to the queen. Here again, in another guise, he found political liberty diffused by a mixed constitution, the mechanism of which he himself was to explain so admirably. He arrived there in 1729, the very date of Voltaire's departure from England, and remained two years, during which he learned to love and understand liberty—a thing which a Frenchman at that time could hardly com-

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prehend. Rich in observation and materials, Montesquieu then retired to his château de la Brède, in 1731, in order to elaborate them in peace, and compose from them the work he was planning. He himself said: "When I was out in the world, I loved it so that I could not endure retirement; when I am on my estates, I no longer think of the world."

Villemain has remarked that this necessity for retirement was something felt by almost all the thinkers of the eighteenth century. Voltaire, after trying a number of retreats, came at last to settle down at Ferney, where he passed the last twenty years of his life. Rousseau lived in the country almost constantly, and always sought solitude. Buffon produced his great works in his château at Montbar; Montesquieu, in his château de la Brède. They all wished to escape at once the distractions and the importunities of the great cities; some sought a greater liberty in their retirement. Far from the world, they acted powerfully on it.

The first fruit of Montesquieu's retirement was the *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains*, in which he sums up with the conciseness of genius the institutions and customs of the Romans, and describes with a most extraordinary precision and penetration the causes that explain the growth and fall of their empire.

In this work, Montesquieu showed himself a great historian, and especially a profound moralist—an initiator of that method which has since been called the psychology of nations. But this was only a detached portrait of the vast whole.¹ Montesquieu had undertaken to embrace in a single work the laws of all nations, by reducing them to fundamental principles and revealing their spirit; whence the title, *The Spirit of Laws*, a work of sociology—his capital work—which contains all his thought and all his life. He labored on it for twenty years: "At last," he says, "I have seen my work begin, develop, advance, and end." It is a masterpiece of French literature. At the outset, the author postulates laws and justice as eternal and absolute—man being given such as he

¹ The *Considérations* were originally meant to be a part of the *Esprit des Lois*; but the author published them separately.

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is organized to receive. There follows a review of various legislations and customs which have contributed to the prosperity of nations or caused their fall; of circumstances, arising at the birth of nations, and moral principles which, transformed into revolutions, changed the face of the world. The author indicates in the very nature of governments the principles that animate them; and from these principles, combined with the needs of peoples, he deduces the laws that have made them live and that still sustain them. He declares for toleration of the most absolute nature in matters of religion. As for his political ideal, after having examined the three principal forms of government—the republic, monarchy, despotism—he finds it in Great Britain's constitution, in which democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy are happily blended. Montesquieu in this work, makes the generalization that the development of a people, and—above all—its laws, depend upon conditions of the land, climate, religion, and temperament. The language he employs is that of the dispassionate observer; for this reason the book was permitted to circulate freely in France and became the basis for the liberal political science of modern times; for this reason also it did not meet with the approval of the rabid republicans who came after him. Nevertheless, it eloquently expounded for the first time the fundamental ideas expressed in the Revolution fifty years later, although Montesquieu did not desire the overthrow of the monarchy. Believing that France was not ripe for a republic, he sought rather to bring about the English political ideal of sound relations between the ruler and the people. *Prolem sine matre creatam* was the motto of his *Esprit des lois* (Spirit of Laws), which consists of thirty books. Of these, the first eight discuss the laws in relation to government in its three forms—the monarchy, the republic, and despotism, with their corresponding attributes of honor, virtue, and fear; each government perishing through an exaggeration of its particular principles. Books nine to thirteen, treat of the laws with reference to liberty, and of the British constitution. Books fourteen to eighteen, consider the laws in connection with the nature of the climate and the land, and refer to the origin of slavery. Book fifteen is devoted to attacking slavery, serfdom, torture, and the inquisition.

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Book nineteen treats of laws with reference to customs; books twenty to twenty-three, of laws in their bearing on commerce, finance, and population; books twenty-four and twenty-five of laws in relation to religion. Books twenty-six to thirty are concerned with the history of the right of inheritance of the Romans and the Franks, and include a study of feudal laws.

It was at Geneva that the two first editions of the *Esprit des lois* were published. Its success far surpassed the author's hopes; there were twenty-two editions in the space of a year and a half, and the work was soon translated into all European languages. Objections, criticisms, epigrams, were not lacking. Voltaire eulogized the work in this phrase: "The human race had lost its charters; M. Montesquieu has rediscovered and restored them." Montesquieu was furiously attacked as an atheist in a journal entitled *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, and the theologians of the Sorbonne prepared to censure his work, but his sole reply to his critics was his "Defense of the Spirit of the Laws"—a masterpiece of irony and eloquence. After the publication of the "Spirit of Laws," which capped his glory but did not change his life and his character, Montesquieu felt his strength declining. He died in 1755, at the age of seventy years. The priest at his bedside said to him a few moments before his death: "You understand, sir, how great is God?" "Yes," answered Montesquieu, "and how petty men are!"

Montesquieu is one of the greatest thinkers and writers of France—a prince in the realm of intellect. His life was that of a sage. He loved and practised virtue because virtue is right and leads to happiness through its regard for the just and true; he did much good without ostentation, and enjoyed the peace of a clear conscience. We know from his own words that he was naturally happy: "I awake in the morning with a secret joy at seeing the light; I behold the sun with a feeling of exultation, and am content all the rest of the day." He was passionately fond of reading, study, and literary composition. "Study," he says, "has been for me the sovereign remedy for the ills of life, since I never have had a disappointment which an hour's reading could not dispel." Montesquieu was out of his element in conversation; he him-

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self said that he was incapable of delivering a lecture, and he was at his best only when writing. "Timidity," he confesses, "has been the scourge of my life; it seems to arrest the action of my vital organs, tie my tongue, cloud my thoughts, and distort my expressions. Yet I have never been less subject to these difficulties and attacks before men of education than before fools, because I could hope that they would understand me, and that gave me confidence." He adds, however, with naïve satisfaction, that on great occasions his mind worked clearly enough. "While at Luxemburg," he tells us, "in the hall in which the Emperor dined, Prince Linski said to me: 'You, sir, who come from France, are probably astonished to see the Emperor so badly housed.' 'My lord,' said I, 'I am pleased to see a country where the subjects of the Emperor are better lodged than their master.' While in Piedmont, King Victor asked me: 'Sir, are you related to the Abbé de Montesquieu, whom I have seen here with the Abbé d'Estrades?' 'Sire,' said I to him, 'Your Majesty is like Cæsar, who never forgot a name.' " It comes to us from another source that some one insisted on persuading him to believe a thing difficult to accept, and with wearisome persistence added: "If this is not true, I will give you my head"—"I accept it," answered Montesquieu. "Trifling gifts cement strong friendships."

He could accommodate himself to the different characteristics of peoples as he could to those of individual persons. "When I am in France," he used to say, "I make friends with everyone; in England, with no one. In Italy I pay compliments to everybody; in Germany I drink with everybody." As a French critic writes: "There was in his composition something better than this adaptability to all tastes; there was that eighteenth-century breadth of sentiment which we call cosmopolitanism: he could easily have said with Socrates, I am not only a citizen of Athens; I am a citizen of the world. Such was Montesquieu, whose essential moderation of character is not to be confused with indifference, nor interpreted as an offspring of egotism—a moderation that did not exclude a certain warmth, tempered but real, not only for his friends and for the unfortunate, but for the public good and the welfare of humanity. It was this temperamental modera-

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tion that caused, or at least supported, the moderation of his mind. Hence his impartiality, his breadth of view, his intelligent grasp of history, and his respect for tradition."

BUFFON

Georges Louis Le Clerc, Comte de Buffon, was born at Montbard, Côte d'Or, in 1707. Of an ancient family of lawyers, in easy circumstances, honorable and esteemed, he was early in life able to choose his career. In spite of the paternal traditions, he devoted himself unhesitatingly to science—first of all to mathematics and general physics. After having accompanied a young Englishman, the Duke of Kingston, and his tutor to Italy, and then to England, he began to gain prominence by the translation of two works of a scientific nature—the *Statique des végétaux* of Hales and the *Traité des flexions* of Newton. When he was only twenty-six years of age, his books gained him admission to the Academy of Sciences, though his writings at this time gave little hint of the renown in store for him. Appointed superintendent of the Royal Gardens, in 1739, he had cultivated the natural sciences very little; it was therefore by accident, and, in a way, officially, that Buffon became a naturalist. After ten years of research and meditation, he published the first three volumes of his *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi*. The first volume contains the *Théorie de la Terre* and *Système sur la formation des planètes*; the second volume, the *Histoire générale des animaux* and the *Histoire particulière de l'homme*; the third, his *Description du cabinet du roi* and *Les variétés de l'espèce humaine*. After an interval of ten years, he published twelve volumes on the history of quadrupeds; and, some years later, ten volumes of the *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux et des minéraux*, together with seven volumes of supplements. This great work established Buffon's fame, not only as a naturalist, but as a writer. He devoted forty years of his life to it, and was assisted by such collaborators as the savant Daubenton,¹ the Abbé Bexon, and

¹ Daubenton's special work was concerned with the anatomy and dissection of animals.

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Guineau de Montbéliard. Yet even then he did not finish the task, which was completed by Lacépède, from Buffon's notes, with the publication of *Les serpents* (1789), and with Lacépède's original work in six volumes, *Les poissons et les cétaqués*. Thirty years separate the *Théorie de la Terre* (1749) from *les Époques de la Nature* (1779, fifth volume of his supplements); and, as if the natural historian had somehow wrested from his study of nature the secret of eternal youth, the style of the later volume, written by the hand of a septuagenarian, cannot be distinguished from the first, except for its greater accuracy of observation and perfection of form. The *Théorie de la Terre* had astounded the world; the *Époques de la Nature* is perhaps, among all the works of the eighteenth century, that which elevated most the imagination of men. Following his argument, we see that at a date extremely remote a comet was hurled into the sun; several fragments were detached, and one of these fragments became the earth. After glowing for thousands of years, like the sun, it became gradually colder, eventually producing organic beings at first inferior, but progressively more perfect animals. In the sixth epoch, man appears on the scene. These six epochs are almost in accord with the six days of the Bible, if we admit that these days designate periods of indefinite length. Buffon traces eloquent pictures of these imaginary epochs, especially in the last of his works, which is considered a masterpiece of style. His ideas are, in general, conjectures; several, however, have been admitted by science. Less conjectural is his history of animate beings. He begins by establishing the difference that separates the plant from the animal—an extremely minute difference, if we take the germ at the beginning, but which is accentuated in proportion as each being develops. Then he marks the resemblance and differences between the man and the animal; he shows us the *genus homo* in dual form—composed of a body in which the lower appetites rule and an intelligence that directs and dominates the instincts, and, in weak natures, is sometimes dominated by them. There is in this history a celebrated passage in which the first man tells in what order he has acquired his ideas, and how these ideas are entirely the result of his sensations. Buffon then enters into the details of the human structure; he

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analyzes the five senses, he follows the development of the human being from its birth to its death. At this last point he challenges the terrors death inspires in us, and tries to prove, by facts and reasoning, that death in itself is not very painful. Next he passes in review all human races. In regard to the origin of beings, Buffon believes in spontaneous generation; he supposes that at each instant, nature produces germs capable of becoming organized beings by a sort of fermentation. The most popular part is that devoted to animals; he has described in this volume two hundred species of quadrupeds and eight hundred species of birds. Every one of these descriptions is a painting; he is the first among the moderns to combine natural history with eloquence of language. Several of his descriptions are celebrated; among those oftenest cited are the accounts concerning the horse, which he calls the "noble warrior"; the lion, which is to him a "generous king"; the tiger, a "cruel statesman"; the fox, an "adroit thief." All these animals are described according to the relations which Buffon found between them and men. He did for nature what Montesquieu has done for history; he sought for fundamental laws by patient study of facts.

The first volumes of his *Histoire Naturelle* were his passport to the French Academy; on his admission to membership in 1753, he pronounced a discourse on literary style, in which occurs the famous phrase, "Le style est l'homme même,"¹ which has since been changed to the oft-quoted "Le style, c'est l'homme." This is conspicuously true of Buffon: his style reflects his pompous habits, his elevation of ideas, his nobility, and his majestic ways. In the château of Montbard he worked, from early dawn in gala costume—a powdered periwig on his head, great lace ruffles² at his wrists and a sword girded at his side; for, as he said, he could not work unless he felt himself becomingly dressed.

Buffon toiled indefatigably fourteen hours a day, his servant calling him at five in the morning, with orders to use

¹ "Les connaissances, les faits et les découvertes . . . sont hors de l'homme: le style est l'homme même." (Discours de réception à l'Académie Française, 1753.)

² These lace cuffs of his have become proverbial as characterizing affectation of style, manners, or personal behavior.

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violence if necessary. This servant discharged his peculiar duty during sixty years, which led Buffon to remark: "I owe to Joseph at least twelve volumes of my books." In his study the only ornament was a portrait of Newton, and here he passed long hours meditating, correcting, and reading aloud to assure himself of the perfect harmony of his phrases. He wrote laboriously, often spending a whole morning in finding the perfect expression for a thought. It is said that he rewrote his *Études de la Nature* eleven times. This incessant labor explains his numerous works, his pure and harmonious style, and his definition of genius, which he calls a "long patience." On Sundays he went to church accompanied by a Capuchin friar, his confessor and his steward; he walked, with head held high among his vassals, to his lordly pew, where he seated himself with great pomp and received the incense, the holy water, and the other honors due his rank. It was this habitual loftiness of demeanor, and its reflection in his literary style, which prompted Voltaire to say that Buffon's natural history was not natural. Personally he seems to have had no other religion than a calm and serious naturalism; no other "doctrine of morals" than obedience to necessary and immutable laws. He has been reproached for believing that insignificant things should be elevated by ornate diction, which often gives his style a studied and pompous eloquence. But in the correspondence of Buffon collected and annotated by Nadault de Buffon (1860), one may trace the character of the man, which is much more natural and simple than his writings would lead one to believe. Among his letters are some very touching ones to his son, to Madame Daubenton, and Madame Necker, his devoted friend, in whose arms Buffon expired.

The career of Buffon offers few events that are particularly striking; it was peaceful, worthy, and glorious. His time was divided between the Royal Gardens (now Jardin des Plantes), and his estate at Montbard; it would be hard to find such an analogy in the life of any other man of letters. He was, moreover, one of those who live wisely and calmly, though adorned with no mean amount of glory. Buffon was a literary man as well as a scholar; hence he was open to the assaults of emotion. Yet he kept his mind free from such

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conflict. His two ambitions were science and fame. Fully convinced of the superiority of his genius, upon being asked how many great men there were, he answered simply: "Five—Newton, Bacon, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, and myself." His good opinion of himself is not so surprising when we consider that few writers have enjoyed such universal homage. The sovereigns of Europe honored him with their visits or with rich presents. Rousseau, during a visit to Montbard, knelt and kissed the threshold of the door to the pavilion where Buffon composed his *Histoire Naturelle*. In the course of Great Britain's war with her American colonies, some French privateers captured a vessel on which was a box marked with Buffon's address; this box was sent intact to him at Paris. During his lifetime, a statue was erected in his honor at the entrance of the Museum of Natural History, with the inscription, *Majestati naturæ par ingenium* ("His genius equals the majesty of nature"). He justified this inscription admirably by the elevation, the fullness, and the tranquil majesty of his style, in which were reflected the dignity of his life, the grandeur of his demeanor, and the pride of his manners.

One of the four great prose writers of the eighteenth century, he towers above all his literary contemporaries; though in ultimate influence he falls short of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. He had all the power of a talent without passion—a talent which seeks its end only by dint of intelligence, and appeals only to the intellect. Buffon—imposing through his works, the greatness of his talent, the nature of his brain—died on the eve of the Revolution, in 1788.

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau, born in 1712 at Geneva, was the son of a watchmaker; deprived of his mother, separated from his father, for a long time he led an adventurous life. Apprenticed to an engraver who maltreated him, he escaped from his master, and was sheltered by a lady in Savoy, Madame de Warens, who, with charming qualities of mind and heart, led an irregular life and was possessed of false ideas. Rousseau was by turns a clerk, a teacher, a music

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master, a lackey for a countess, and a servant in a house in Turin, where his master, discovering his abilities, made him his secretary. But Rousseau soon tired of this, and joined a comrade with whom he led a vagabond life in Italy and Switzerland, eking out a livelihood by showing for a few sous, a fountain that had the appearance of changing water into wine. Finally, this genius and Jack-of-all-trades acted for a time as secretary to the French Ambassador at Venice. Ever a dreamer, and impractical, he returned at intervals to Madame de Warens, at Chambéry, and especially to her country house of Les Charmettes, where he completed his studies in solitude, and practiced the art of writing. He thought that he had found, in a new method of noting music, the means to help his benefactress, whose affairs were in disorder, and he went to Paris to submit it to the Academy of Sciences; but the Academy pronounced it impracticable. He succeeded, however, in having presented at the Opéra two little pieces of which he had composed both the music and the words: *Le Devin de village* (The Village Soothsayer), and *Les Muses galantes*, in imitation of Italian composers; but he did not succeed in making a reputation as a composer of music. *Le Devin de village* was received very favorably at the court of Louis XV, and in other circles, but, as was characteristic of Rousseau, he hurled at his supporters his *Lettre sur la musique française*, in which he harshly criticised the productions of French music, and thus cut off his chance for further success. Poverty was at his door; he had contracted in Paris, an alliance with a vulgar person in every respect unworthy of him—an alliance that became a marriage in fact, and exercised an unfortunate influence on his whole life. When children were born to him, he placed them in the foundling asylum. He himself tells us about it in his famous *Confessions*, and shamelessly writes that he did it “gaillardement et sans scrupule.” Afterwards, on second thought, he explains that neither he nor their mother could have reared them decently.

Rousseau had tried everything, and succeeded in nothing. With an extreme vivacity of imagination his power of conception so outstripped his capacity for expression that he believed the calling of a writer was unsuited to him. One

day he was informed of a question propounded by a literary society of Dijon: "Has the reëstablishment of the arts and sciences contributed to corrupt or purify morals?" This was the spark which fired the mine. Rousseau, bursting for utterance, exploded his pent-up powers. All the tumultuous thoughts crowding in his brain took form; all the bitterness of his heart overflowed. He wrote rapidly the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, which, at the age of thirty-seven years, opened his career. In this work he maintained that the development of the arts had served to corrupt customs and institutions. The Academy was astounded; his thesis, though false and absurd, was supported with an eloquence so impassioned, and a style so incomparable that the prize was given to this enemy of the sciences and arts, and, with the aid of the attendant publicity, Rousseau found himself suddenly famous. The *Discours sur les sciences* was followed by the *Discours sur l'inégalité*. These two extraordinary compositions rest one upon the other, and develop, under two different aspects, the same thought. Rousseau, in his first work, condemned the sciences; in the second, he even condemned society. He held that the sciences and arts had corrupted the human race. He regretted the simplicity of primitive peoples—even the savage state, without education or progress; he regretted that the human race had ever established society, property, inequality. Yet his conclusions, and especially the commentaries which he wrote to defend his two *Discours*, are less excessive than his first assertions. He modified his first exaggerated statements and held that in accordance with the very nature of man, the savage state cannot endure, and that society and property, once established, cannot be suppressed; but that it is a great evil that moral progress has not kept pace with intellectual and material progress, and that we prefer the talents to the virtues of men.

The *Contrat social, ou principes du droit politique*, which appeared shortly afterwards, hinges on the same sequence of ideas. The subject is the same as that of the *Esprit des Lois*, but the method is different. Between the epoch of savagery, in which men were independent and equal, and the present epoch in which they are unequal and dependent, there was concluded, he said, a tacit contract between the governed and

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those governing: the weak promised to obey the strong, on condition that they be protected; the strong promised to protect the weak, on condition that the weak obeyed them. But, according to the author, the rights on both sides are equal: if the weak revolt, they no longer have the right to be protected; if the strong govern badly, they no longer have the right to be obeyed. And this is revolution.

Le Contrat social is a work which mingles dangerous errors along with the great truths it contains. However, it remains one of the most considerable monuments of the eighteenth century, and in it is explained definitely the true principle of political sovereignty. It has great celebrity, and—more or less thoroughly understood—it inspired the majority of political doctrines during the French Revolution. It has been said that “in Beaumarchais’s *Figaro* one heard the noise of the tumbling walls of the Bastille, and in Rousseau’s *Contrat social*, the fall of the guillotine.” It was the foundation of the politics of the Jacobins that led to the Reign of Terror with Robespierre at its head. “Qui s’oppose à la volonté générale doit y être contraint par tout le corps, ce qui ne signifie autre chose sinon qu’on le force d’être libre”: in other words, political and religious liberty must be sacrificed to the general will (*volonté générale*).

In the *Contrat social*, Rousseau also declares himself against the free press. “Let us return to nature” is the principle of the book. Voltaire said after reading it: “Never has any one applied so much genius in order to make beasts of us. One fairly feels the desire to walk on all fours.” Rousseau, to exemplify his writings, reformed his life even as to his costume. Discarding his sword and his lace cuffs, he became “citizen of Geneva, man of nature, enemy of social conventions.”

Rousseau’s *Émile, ou de l’éducation* is a treatise on education which in many pages bears the marks of a philosophical novel. It begins with the birth of the child: the author would have the mother herself take care, for the first few years of its life, of this being that owes her its existence. The principle expressed in the first sentence sounds the keynote of the whole book: “All that issues from the hands of the Author of Nature is good, all that is in the hands of men

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is degenerated; and, the education given by society being bad, it is time to establish a negative education as the best, or rather the only good one." *Émile* was the foundation of modern pedagogy. The first four books of this work are devoted to the education of the two sexes in general, then to that of *Émile* in particular; the fifth is given over to the education of woman, and to Sophie, who has been chosen as the wife of *Émile*. In the fourth book, the famous *Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard*, depicts the religious belief of Rousseau himself, and attacks materialism as well as orthodoxy. A French critic says that Rousseau is more dangerous than Voltaire and the Encyclopedists; the latter at once excite indignation, but Rousseau, by his affectionate and sentimental Deism deceives the religious and sophisticates the moral feeling by substituting vague thoughts for the positive idea of duty. The work as a whole is full of fine and delicate observations and excellent advice; the meeting of two young people and the awakening of their sentiments are the occasions of naïve and charming scenes. It closes with the marriage of *Émile* and Sophie. Later, Rousseau continued the story of *Émile*, who becomes counselor for the Bey in Algiers; but it came to no conclusion. The book had a salutary influence on the mode of education for children, which at that time was false. The great apostle of education, Pestalozzi, grew up in the atmosphere of Rousseau's teachings, and applied in practice his theories. Goethe called *Émile* the "Naturevangelium der Erziehung."¹

Rousseau composed *Émile* at the "Ermitage," at the entrance of the forest of Montmorency, which Madame d'Épinay had offered him, where he spent five years copying music for a living. He closed his doors to all the world, even to his old friends of Paris: Voltaire, Baron Grimm, Diderot, and d'Holbach. A quarrel with Madame d'Épinay made the further occupation of the "Ermitage" impossible and he accepted the offer of the Duke of Luxembourg, who placed the château of Montlouis at his disposal. Rousseau's *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* was his dismissal from the Encyclopedists and his declaration of war against the whole

¹ Nature-gospel of Education.

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party. The first book which solitude inspired him to write was the celebrated epistolary novel, *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*. It recalls the love of Héloïse and Abélard, and is concerned with the affections and the lives of two young people, Julie and Saint-Preux. The scene is laid in Clarens, on Lake Geneva. Rousseau has taken Richardson's "Clarissa" as his model for this story, but *Julie* in turn served as a model for Goethe's *Werther*. Rousseau himself passes a judgment on this book in his preface: "Ce livre n'est point fait pour circuler dans le monde; il convient à très peu de lecteurs. Toute fille qui aura lu une page de ce livre est une fille perdue."¹ Vinet says: "Ni l'éclat du style ni les admirables descriptions de la nature ne pourront jamais racheter l'immoralité de cet ouvrage qu'il est prudent et sage de ne jamais ouvrir, comme l'auteur lui même d'ailleurs nous le conseille."² The novel had, however, an unheard-of success. Love spoke a language unknown to the eighteenth century and to modern literature. All hearts were profoundly affected; all women were henceforth on the side of Rousseau. In the other novels of the time, women were capricious and charming beings, not to be taken seriously. Rousseau, on the contrary, placed them on a pedestal, and showed them as always superior to men. For three quarters of a century he remained their favorite author.

A French critic writes: "In his Essay on the Origin of Languages, instead of condemning society, as he had done in his *Discours*, Rousseau seeks its origin, and pictures its beginnings with marvelous divination. He shows that at the outset, words, poetry, music, and the expression of the feelings and of ideas and forms by gesture, were one. Primitive languages were sung, and gestures gave birth to the art of design and sculpture. Rousseau continued to express in this book, his preference for the poetic existence of pastoral tribes in the ancient Orient to modern civilization; but he no longer spoke

¹ "This book is not made to circulate in the world; it is suitable for very few readers. Any girl who has read a page of this book is a ruined girl.

² Neither the brilliancy of style nor the admirable descriptions of nature could ever redeem the immorality of this work, which it would be prudent never to open, as indeed the author warns us."

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of savage life, which is only animal life, beyond which man is naturally drawn by the principle of perfectibility that resides in him, as Rousseau recognizes."

After *Émile*, persecution burst upon Rousseau. Royalty and clergy felt themselves touched to the quick. The *Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard* (one of the most remarkable episodes of *Émile*, in which Rousseau sought to prove the necessity of a completely personal religion) was strongly criticised by the Catholic clergy as well as by Protestant pastors. Rousseau replied to these criticisms with a letter entitled, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Christophe de Beaumont* (Archbishop of Paris). Faithful to the device which he had adopted—*Vitam impendere vero* (sacrifice your life to truth), he did not hide himself under false names, but signed everything that he wrote. *Émile* was denounced by the parliament of Paris, by the Sorbonne, and by the archbishop, and was ordered to be burned by the hangman. A warrant of arrest was issued against him; but certain great personages facilitated his escape. Those who were charged with his arrest saluted him, and smiled when he left his house; and were content to report that when they had presented themselves at his home he was no longer there. Rousseau retired to Switzerland, where he found refuge in the village of Motiers-Travers near Neuchâtel, and a friendly welcome from Marshal George Keith, the governor of the province. Here he wrote the political pamphlet *Lettres de la Montagne*, a masterpiece of dialectics and fine irony in answer to Tronchin's *Lettres de la Campagne*. The intrigues of his enemies aroused some of the fanatic peasants to attack his house, and Rousseau was driven from the village. The same proscription awaited him everywhere. Forced to abandon his sojourn in the little isle of Saint-Pierre, in the middle of the Lake of Bienné (immortalized by his delightful sketch of it), whither he had retired to avoid the annoyances imposed on him in the village, he was about to accept an invitation from Frederick II of Prussia, but yielded to David Hume's urgent invitation to live in England. He was most kindly received by George III, who gave him a pension, and Hume established him in the County of Derby. Unfortunately, Rousseau, always distrustful, quarreled with the great Englishman, and left his place

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of retirement very suddenly. He then returned to France, where he was received with enthusiasm. The Prince of Conti established him in a residence at Trie-le-Château; but again his morbid susceptibilities got the better of him, and he remained there only two months. Thence he went to Lyons, to Grenoble, to Chambéry, finally to Paris—his misanthropy increasing the while. Without having entirely renounced the world, he resolved not to write any more. However, he took up the pen again to work out a book unfortunately only too celebrated—the *Confessions* (1766–1770), an autobiography in which, with infinite literary art, he said of himself, in all sincerity, everything good and everything evil that can be said, revealing his most secret faults as well as his inmost thoughts. The *Confessions* is not an edifying book. In it Rousseau avows with unabashed frankness all his faults, as the only expiation which he could impose upon himself. He says, “J’ai été puni où j’ai péché”; but he writes without humility, in fact with defiance, as the very beginning of the book shows: “May the trumpet sound the last judgment day when it will, and I shall then appear with this book in my hands to present myself before the Almighty Judge. I shall say loudly: ‘This is what I have done, this is what I thought, this is what I was. . . . Eternal Being, gather about me the numberless throng of my fellow creatures . . . let anyone of these dare say: “I was better than this man.” ’ ”

Rousseau’s cynical pride is monumental, but as to style the work is admirable. How many pages are replete with freshness; what heartiness of description in all his youthful adventures, in his walks in which he is so well able to transmit to us his passionate love of nature! This work was begun in England, at the time when his mind was already disturbed; but his sinister visions of the present did not obscure the charm of his reminiscences. Seized with that sad affection, both moral and physical, which is called hypochondria, or the black sickness, and magnifying to himself the enmities which he had incurred by his double war against priests and atheists, he imagined himself to be the object of universal hatred, and put no faith in the sincere sympathy and homage that people were ready to accord him. His state of mind, aggravated by sad infirmities, made his last years quite pain-

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ful, but with his genius always brilliant, he wrote the painful dialogues of *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques*, and his *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1777-1778). Having lived since his return to Paris for eight years in a humble dwelling, he finally accepted from a friend, M. de Girardin, a refuge more in conformity with his tastes than the tumultuous streets of Paris—a refuge in a beautiful part of the country, at Ermenonville. A month later he died (1778), without anyone being able to determine whether his death was accidental or deliberate suicide.

Rousseau worked a revolution in literature and morals. The licentious superficiality which, until then, had characterized writers, disappeared entirely; men began to extol virtue, the countryside, nature, love of country, and of humanity; woman again won respect, and family life was again in a position of honor. Voltaire himself, who violently attacked this “barbarian of eloquence,” as he called him, attributed to the influence of the Genevese philosopher the renewal of his own talent. From Rousseau proceeded Romanticism; he introduced new qualities into literature; for the spirit of analysis he substituted love and the cult of nature, passionate eloquence and personal exaltation; also, he laid bare that lamentable vein of melancholy and restlessness called in the nineteenth century, *mal du siècle*. No writer of the eighteenth century has attained that poetic sublimity compounded with falseness and destructiveness. No one helped so much to emancipate the human mind from the shackles of despotism; but neither has anyone contributed more to the destruction of the fundamental idea of true liberty. In politics he undermined the ancient institutions, and gave the *coup de grâce* to royalty by popularizing republican ideas. In religion he rejected all revealed authority, but defended the dogmas of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and was an adversary of atheism and materialism. Unfortunately his life was a tangle of inconsistencies, as his works were a tangle of paradoxes and sophisms. A whole school of writers depends from Rousseau—among them: Bernardin de St. Pierre, Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand. Lamartine, George Sand.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ENCYCLOPEDISTS

ONE of the greatest literary enterprises of the eighteenth century was the famous French *Encyclopédie*. The incentive to this work originated in a French translation of *Chambers's Cyclopædia*,¹ by John Mills and Gottfried Sellins, both residents of Paris. Jean Paul de Gua de Malves, professor of philosophy in the College of France, was engaged as editor to correct errors and add new discoveries, but owing to some dispute he withdrew and the publisher offered the task to Diderot, who persuaded the editor to undertake an original and more comprehensive work.

In 1740 was granted the royal privilege for the *Encyclopédie* which began to appear in 1751 under the title of *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres*. (Methodical Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Trades, by a Society of Men of Letters.) The first edition numbered 4,250 copies which were quickly sold. It was a scientific monument that contained a history of philosophy, and the technical description of all the arts and occupations practiced in France at this time. It was also an instrument of war. All the innovators and free thinkers who wished to modify society from a religious or political standpoint united to work out new theories and destroy beliefs of the past. It became identified with the philosophic movement of the time, and the term *Encyclopédiste* became recognized as designating a certain form of philosophy. The "Preliminary Discourse," written by d'Alembert is an admirable synthetic picture of human

¹ The most ancient encyclopedia extant is the Natural History in thirty-seven books by Pliny, first century after Christ.

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knowledge, and constitutes one of the chief philosophical works of the eighteenth century. D'Alembert also wrote the treatises on Mathematics. Voltaire, Montesquieu, Buffon, and Rousseau who took music and philosophy for his theme, all contributed largely to the *Encyclopédie* during a period of ten years. Mallet wrote on theology and history, Yvon on logic and ethics. Daubenton furnished articles on natural history, Marmontel on literary subjects; the Abbé Bergier treated theology; the classification of the sciences was provided by the Englishman, Bacon. Louis wrote on surgery, Eidons on heraldry and art, Toussaint on jurisprudence, La Condamine on South America, Turgot on economics. These men, together with other contributors—Condillac, Helvetius, d'Holbach, Baron Grimm, Volney—were known as the Encyclopedists. Diderot performed a giant's work; besides assigning to himself the subject of ancient philosophy, he superintended everything, including the corrections and the engravings, and wrote numerous articles on the arts and trades. No writer knew the processes of the mechanical arts; so Diderot took this task upon himself. He went among the workshops, seeking explanations, examining the working of machines, and even going to work himself in order to feel assured that he had understood perfectly; then, returning home, he would write down what he had observed. Besides all this, he was ever ready to help with his facile pen his numerous friends, and thus much of what they did is due to him.

The *Encyclopédie* was the object of the most violent persecution by the church and government, and its publication was in turn permitted and forbidden. In 1749 Diderot was imprisoned at Vincennes for a short time. After his release the work continued; but in 1759 the privilege was again revoked, and d'Alembert retired in the face of all these difficulties. In 1765 the printer, Lebreton, was put into the Bastille, and a royal order was sent to the subscribers to deliver their copies to the agents of the police. Owing to the protection of Madame de Pompadour, of the bookseller, of Lamoignon de Malesherbe, Quesnay, and of the Prefect of police de Sartines, the Encyclopedia continued publication. Voltaire relates that at a supper of the king's at the Trianon, there arose a debate on the composition of gunpowder, and

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Madame de Pompadour said she did not know how her rouge or her silk stockings were made. The Duc de La Vallière regretted that the king had confiscated the encyclopedias as they would have furnished the required information and settled the dispute. The king sent for a copy, and three servants with difficulty brought in twenty-one volumes. The required information was found, and the king allowed all the confiscated copies to be returned. The Encyclopedia also suffered atrocious mutilation at the hands of the printer, Lebreton. Grimm tells us that in printing the last ten volumes, Lebreton had the articles set in type just as the authors sent them in, and when Diderot had corrected the last proof of each sheet, the printer secretly cut out whatever seemed to him daring or likely to give offense, burning the manuscript as he proceeded. Most of the best articles were ruined, and Diderot only accidentally discovered this fraud in referring to one of his back articles.

The *Encyclopédie* was not constructed on a regular plan; many of the articles are excellent and some are inferior and faulty, but it was an interesting and comprehensive work of great political importance, and held a conspicuous place in the civil and literary history of the century.

THE PHYSIOCRATES

François Quesnay was the principal founder of political economy, and the chief of the school of physiocrats (economists), a group of French philosophers and political economists who achieved great prominence in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The Physiocrats considered the cultivation of the land as the chief source of national wealth. According to Quesnay there are certain economic laws to which the legislator must adapt himself. All autocratic interference with the laws of production and exchange is detrimental, hence the famous maxim of de Gournay: *Laissez faire, laissez passer*. Quesnay published his ideas on economics in the *Encyclopédie* in 1756. The name Physiocracy (from the Greek "supremacy of nature") was first given to the doctrine in 1767 by Dupont de Nemours.

Physiocracy was defended by the Marquis de Mirabeau

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(the elder), Dupont de Nemours, Mercier de la Rivière. The greatest man inspired by these principles was Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Baron de L'Aulne who not only aided in a literary way in his *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des Richesses*, but also practically worked for this system. Brunetière notes the difference between the encyclopedists and the economists: "the encyclopedists are theorists and rationalists; the economists, empiricists or utilitarians."

DIDEROT

Denis Diderot (1713-1784), the son of a cutler of Langres—a philosopher, an author of inexhaustible fertility, endowed with a brilliant imagination and an incredible capacity for work—is perhaps the most powerful genius, the most marked personality of his time, and the man who best sums up the philosophic aspirations of the eighteenth century. It is, however, only lately, with the appearance of a complete edition of his works by Assézat, that Diderot's genius has been fully recognized. Born and reared a Catholic, his writings show at various stages his gradual change from Orthodoxy to Materialism. In his *Essai sur la vérité et la vertu* (1745), he attacks atheism; his *Pensées philosophiques* (1748) show him a deist without fixed religious belief; and in his *Lettre sur les Aveugles* he is a decided materialist. In the latter work he forestalls Darwin's principles of evolution and of the survival of the fittest. His stories *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, *La Religieuse*, have been much censured, but they were written during the reign of the reprobate Louis XV. The novel *Jacques le Fataliste*, an imitation of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, was taken by Sardou as a model for his thrilling play, *Fernande*. *Le neveu de Rameau* became known to Germany before it was read in France, owing to its translation by Goethe, who had a copy of the original manuscript. The German translation was in turn translated into French before the edition from the original manuscript appeared some eighteen years later.

Diderot created artistic criticism by his famous *Salons* (1765-67), written in response to the request of Baron Grimm that he write some lines for a manuscript journal, that was being sent to Germanw, concerning pictures ex-

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hibited every year in Paris. It is in his *Contes* especially that Diderot exhibits great power. Here we find, among other little stories told in a charming manner, the original on which Krylov (the Russian La Fontaine) drew for his fable, "The Ass and the Nightingale." Two pathetic tales are *Les deux amis de Bourbonne*, and *L'Histoire de Mademoiselle de La Chaux et du docteur Gardeil*.

It is said that Diderot, in order to help a poor young writer, once wrote a satire directed against himself and addressed to the Duc d'Orléans, who hated him; and thereby gained for the indigent author the duke's approval and a substantial sum of money. Some of his critical essays are fascinating, though lavish and superlative in praise, and of annihilating severity in censure. In this genre he occupied the place in France that Lessing held in Germany. Among his best essays are: *Réflexions sur les femmes*; *Regrets sur ma vieille robe de chambre*; *Éloge de Richardson* (his favorite author). Of women he says: "Quand on veut écrire sur les femmes, il faut tremper sa plume dans l'arc-en-ciel et secouer sur sa ligne la poussière des ailes du papillon."¹ Diderot was a very versatile writer; his works embrace novels, dramas, critiques, history, philosophy, scientific works, and an extremely interesting correspondence. One of the most valuable documents of the social life of the eighteenth century is his correspondence, during twenty years, with Mademoiselle Voland. His dramas, *Le fils naturel*, after Goldoni's comedy *Il vero amico*, and *Le père de famille*, are his weakest productions; but though these plays left no impression in France, they were the inspiration for the "tearful comedies" (*comédies larmoyantes*) cultivated in Germany by Kotzebue, Iffland, and Schroeder. Diderot possessed the power of depicting the extraordinary, along with a rare sense of living reality, and a remarkable ability for portraying the true family life of the people. In these respects he greatly influenced Lessing, who acknowledged the indebtedness and made it clear in his dramas, *Emilia Galotti* and *Miss Sara Sampson*.

Diderot once appeared in St. Petersburg, at the invitation

¹ "When one wishes to write about women he must dip his pen in the rainbow and sand his line with the down from the wings of the butterfly."

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of Empress Catherine; and philosopher and empress were mutually charmed. Later, knowing that Diderot was in need, the empress bought his library, and gave him an annual pension for taking care of it.

Jean-le-Rond D'Alembert (1717-83), the assiduous collaborator and friend of Diderot, had nothing of his confrère's fiery character; he was of quite the opposite nature. D'Alembert was found when a child under the steps of the church of Jean-le-Rond near Notre-Dame, in Paris; and was therefore christened Jean-le-Rond. As he was puny, the police, instead of putting him in the asylum for foundlings, turned him over to be cared for by the wife of a glazier in the neighborhood. It transpired later that his mother was Madame de Tencin, the author of several esteemed novels. Meanwhile, the assistance which the glazier secretly received enabled him to give the child a good education; and the grateful boy, on becoming a man, continued to live with his foster parents, even when he had achieved fame. After he had achieved celebrity, his mother, Madame de Tencin, made herself known to him, and wished to have him with her; but the young philosopher, little touched by this tardy recognition, did not hesitate a moment in answering: "Madame, my real mother is the glazier's wife. I know no other." D'Alembert's talents and character won for him a high place among the writers of his time. Enjoying a merited consideration, and attaining an honest and sufficient fortune, he saw, gathered in his drawing-room, the most distinguished politicians, soldiers, writers, of whom Paris could boast. His reputation, however, was due less to his achievements as a man of letters than to his scholarship, and to his prowess in the mathematical sciences, of which he made a specialty, and to which he contributed important discoveries. Besides his share in the *Encyclopédie*, d'Alembert wrote the *Éléments de Philosophie*, in four volumes, and the *Éloges* of the scholars whom he had survived—eulogies rich in curious anecdotes well told. A man of wisdom, of moderate ambitions, he declined the tutorship of Paul, son of Catherine II—to which was attached a pension of one hundred thousand livres; he refused the presidency of the Academy of Sciences at Berlin, proffered by Frederick II—content with the honors afforded him by the French Academy and by the Académie

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des Sciences, of which he was life secretary. His numerous letters to Voltaire, of which a part are found in Voltaire's published correspondence, do the greatest honor to his intelligence, his character, and his pen.

Frédéric Melchior, baron de Grimm (1723-1807), a French writer and critic of German origin, was a collaborator of Diderot, and friend of all the great French writers during his long residence in Paris. His *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique* written in French comprises seventeen volumes¹ and covers the period from 1753 to 1790. At first this correspondence was in the form of bulletins addressed to the Duchess of Saxony-Gotha, who wished information as to the literary works of the French. Many of the letters were also sent to the Empress of Russia, the Queen of Sweden, to the King of Prussia, and to the King of Poland. Later the correspondence became a great collection, and some other writers contributed, principally Diderot with his *Salons*. It moreover became the organ of the Encyclopedists for the foreign monarchs; it included excellent sketches of the literature of art, of music, of the authors, actors, and celebrities of the court, and proved an inexhaustible treasure of anecdotes and criticisms on these themes.

Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, marquis de Condorcet (1743-94), was an Encyclopedist and the organizer of the French system of public instruction. His writings included scientific, economical, political works, eulogies, sketches, memoirs, and correspondence. During the Revolution he was an enthusiastic Girondist. After the fall of his party, he found refuge during eight months in the house of a friend where he wrote many of his works, the most important of which is his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1794). Finally arrested, Condorcet poisoned himself in his prison.

¹ Best edition by Maurice Tourneux, 1882.

CHAPTER XXII

TRAGEDY, COMEDY, "TEARFUL" DRAMA, POETRY, THE NOVEL

AFTER Voltaire tragedy languished, surviving only in feeble imitations until the genre exhausted itself and the drama took its place. Nevertheless, for many years the poets who essayed tragedy were as numerous as they were mediocre. As for comedy—a new school proceeding from Diderot broke away from the classic model and counted many disciples: Sedaine, Mercier, Lemercier, D'Arnaud, Beaumarchais, and others who prepared the way for the gloomy melodrama of Caigniez, Du Cange and Pixérécourt followed by the great romantic movement.

Michel Jean Sedaine (1719–97), life secretary of the Royal Academy of Architecture, was one of the most modest and charming of men. Illiterate, and absolutely incapable of drawing his works from a source other than himself, Voltaire said to him: "Then it is you, Monsieur, who never borrow from anyone?" "I am no richer than if I had done so," answered Sedaine.

Michel Jean Sedaine¹ contributed two pretty comedies to the Théâtre-Français—*La Gageure imprévue* and *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*. George Sand wrote a sequel to his comedy *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, with the title, *Le Mariage de Victorine*. Sedaine wrote many comic operas—among them, *Aucassin et Nicolette* and *Richard Cœur de Lion*, in which occurs the famous couplet:

O Richard! O mon roi!
L'univers t'abandonne;
Sur la terre il n'est que moi

¹ Alfred de Vigny introduced him into one of his prettiest contes: *La Veillée de Vincennes*.

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Qui m'intéresse à ta personne.
Je voudrais briser tes fers,
Et tout le reste t'abandonne.¹

This was the favorite song of the royalists during the imprisonment of Louis XVI; and it cost many an imprudent singer his head.

Louis-Sébastien Mercier's comedies depicted modern society and the people. His *Déserteur* earned for him the protection of Marie-Antoinette and a pension. In his *Essai sur l'art dramatique* he declared war against the classics and continued with a bitter criticism of them in his *Mon Bonnet de Nuit*.

Louis-Jean Népomucène Lemer cier at the age of seventeen became a literary celebrity with the representation of his tragedy *Mélèagre* at the Théâtre-Français. His comedy *Pinto* was the first French historical comedy.

François Thomas Marie de Baculard D'Arnaud wrote four plays, only one of which was produced. He was the author of many poems, novels, and sacred odes, one of which the *Lamentations de Jérémie* called forth a satirical quatrain of Voltaire:

Savez-vous pourquoi Jérémie
A tant pleuré pendant sa vie?
C'est qu'en prophète il prévoyait
Que Baculard le traduirait.²

Pierre Augustin Caron (better known as Beaumarchais), born at Paris in 1732 (died in 1799), was not only a writer; he combined, as he says himself, the love of letters with that of affairs—manufacturing supplies and making plays, prosecuting lawsuits and diplomacy, all at the same time. The son of a watchmaker, he practiced for a time the calling of his father, and even invented an improvement in the mechanism of watches. As a musician, his proficiency on the harp, and his

¹ O Richard, O my king! The world abandons thee; on earth I alone am interested in thy welfare. I would break thy chains—all the rest abandoning thee.

² Do you know why Jeremiah
Wept so much during his lifetime?
It is because, being a prophet, he foresaw
That Baculard would translate him.

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beautiful voice caused him to be called upon to give lessons to the sisters of Louis XV, who appointed him leader of their little concerts at court. He also ingratiated himself with the great banker and financier, Pâris Duverney, who had founded a military school and had made many unsuccessful attempts to obtain royal approval of it by a visit from the king. Caron, with the aid of the princesses, prevailed upon the king to visit the school, and Duverney, in gratitude, allowed his intercessor to share in several large ventures that brought him immense wealth. Caron, moreover, married a rich woman, and soon added the name Beaumarchais (the title of one of his wife's estates) to his own, prefixing a *de* which he bought for a round sum. "I am a noble," he said, "for I have the receipt for it."

The acquisition of his title excited some ridicule, but he warded off all insults by his prowess as a duelist and his bitter satire. Beaumarchais's brilliant talents and his great pecuniary success made him the object of much envy. One day, splendidly attired, he was on his way to court in Versailles, when a courtier approached him with a sarcastic allusion to his father's trade: "Ah, Monsieur de Beaumarchais, how fortunate I am to meet you! Will you kindly examine my watch? It seems to be wrong." "Willingly," replied Beaumarchais, "but I must warn you that I am very awkward." The courtier, still persisting, Beaumarchais took the timepiece and let it fall. "Ah, Monsieur, a thousand pardons, but I have warned you, and it is you who have wished it!" he said, leaving the angry courtier to pick up his watch.

After Duverney's death, Beaumarchais became involved in a lawsuit with the heirs of the banker's estate, who did not recognize his claim to fifteen thousand francs Duverney had left him. He won the case in the preliminary trial court, but at the second hearing he lost it. He then appealed to public opinion (which he introduced into French life as a new power) through the medium of four *Mémoires*, in which he relentlessly exposed the corruption of the law courts. It was this that suddenly earned him the reputation of a writer. At that time it was a custom, and often a necessity, to go to see one's judges. Beaumarchais had in vain presented himself several times at the house of M. Gozman,, who was to make

the report of his case. He was told that if a certain sum of money were sent to Madame Goezman, an audience would be immediately accorded him; the lady would, moreover, promise to return the money if Beaumarchais lost his case. The case was lost, and the money was returned, with the exception of fifteen gold louis, which Madame Goezman maintained had been given to the secretary, and the secretary declared he had not received. Beaumarchais pressed his claim to the fifteen louis; the lady refused to give them up. M. Goezman then accused Beaumarchais of having wanted to bribe him. So Beaumarchais wrote the *Mémoires* to defend himself; and his opponents answered in kind, by way of accusation. Judiciary notes were always printed, but were not ordinarily sold. Beaumarchais put his on sale; they were eagerly bought, and soon the whole of France was talking of the affair. Humorous scenes, pleasant repartee, wit—not always in the best of taste, but which covered his adversaries with ridicule—an inexhaustible gayety, a penetrating and irresistible logic—all this characterizes the *Mémoires*. With this weapon he fought, as Voltaire said, a dozen persons at once. His ridicule of the parliament made all Europe stare, contributing much to discredit monarchy and the ancient institutions, and to precipitate the Revolution.

In 1764, he made a journey to Spain to avenge himself on the rascal Clavijo, a writer of Madrid, who was engaged to wed his sister, but who left her shamefully on the eve of her marriage. Beaumarchais was successful in depriving Clavijo of his honors and his post, and in having him banished from court. He describes all this in his *Mémoires*, and so dramatically and so well that Goethe took from this source entire scenes for his own *Clavijo*.

Beaumarchais had also busied himself in Spain with the collection of popular melodies; and in order to utilize them he composed a comic opera, *Le Barbier de Séville*. The opera was refused, so he made a comedy of it, which became the first part of his trilogy on *Figaro*¹—the two other parts being

¹ The words of Figaro: "Je me presse de rire de tout de peur d'être obligé d'en pleurer" ("I hasten to laugh at everything lest I be obliged to weep over it"), were taken by the journal, *Le Figaro*, as its motto.

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Le Mariage de Figaro, ou la folle journée and *La mère coupable, ou l'autre Tartufe*, a play of the "tearful" kind, greatly inferior to the preceding two. The characters of the three plays are the same. Figaro is first presented as a barber who has been, in turn, a physician, a poet, and a journalist. Engaged in business, he wrote couplets, worked on political economy, and pieces for the theater. Fortune betrayed him; but this did not prevent him from waxing round and fat, in spite of misery, or from preserving a gayety under every trial, and an activity which embroiled him in intrigues and enterprises of all sorts. Nevertheless, his probity remained intact, though he had a bad reputation. In the *Barbier de Séville*, the masterpiece of the French comedy of the eighteenth century, Figaro brought about the marriage of Rosina to Count Almaviva and attached himself to the count's service. This play is a perfect type of the comedy of intrigue, a masterpiece of satiric malice and grace. It was used by Rossini and Paisiello in their operas, *Il Barbieri di Siviglia*. In the second piece, *Le Mariage de Figaro*—the most audacious of the trilogy—the hero defends his fiancée against this same count, who wishes to take her from him. It is in this play that Brid'oison figures—the judge who sings the final couplet ending with this line: "Tout finit par des chansons" ("everything ends in song"), which has become traditional. In the third play of this trilogy, *La mère coupable*, Figaro reconciles the countess with the count, who has grown old, and unmasks a knave to whom Beaumarchais has given the ill-disguised name of a lawyer, one Bergasse, who in a lawsuit had pleaded against him with scornful emphasis. The libretto of the little two-act opera, *Les Noces de Figaro*, by Lorenzo Da Ponte, is borrowed from the *Mariage de Figaro* of Beaumarchais; the music, by Mozart, is an operatic masterpiece.

In the *Mariage de Figaro*, the old government, the old society, the clergy, nobility, magistracy, are given over to the ridicule of all in a series of scenes sparkling with gayety; we can feel the breath of revolution in every line. Louis XVI was not mistaken; when they sent him the manuscript he declared that he would never permit the piece to be played; that nothing less than the destruction of the Bastille would

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make the representation of it consistent. But the queen and all the court intervened, sportively applying to the king the phrase in the monologue of the play: "Il n'y que les petits hommes qui aient peur des petits écrits¹;" and after a delay of four years the play was performed to the frenzied applause of the people. A few years later the Revolution destroyed irrevocably what Figaro had criticised.

Beaumarchais summed up in his comedies all the genres of his predecessors, the Italians, the Spanish, Molière, Le Sage, Diderot, Regnard, Marivaux, to which he added his personal qualities and the particular aspect of the life of his epoch. Written in a brilliant style, his comedies excelled in gayety and wit, and he became the great playwright of this period, although he ignored almost entirely the rules of the classicists, rejected Alexandrines, and introduced prose on the stage, much to the astonishment and wrath of the critics. Voltaire was jealous of him, and at the same time admired him, saying, apropos of the *Mémoires*: "What a man! he includes everything: pleasantry, seriousness, reason, gayety, force, pathos, all the kinds of eloquence in style; and he finds them all without effort."

"No one," says Jules Lemaître, "has ever analyzed and expressed with more delicacy, the most subtle questions of vanity and love than Marivaux. Love—not violent, but charming and coquettish in an artificial world." Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux (1688–1763) was a dramatic author and novelist. His style was such, that it has enriched the language with a new word: in French, *marivaudage* is used to express a somewhat affected manner that is, nevertheless, not displeasing, and, if sometimes a little tedious, by no means ridiculous. Marivaux composed a great number of pieces characterized by an accurate and delicate psychology. Among them are: *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard*; *Le Legs*; *Les fausses confidences*; *La surprise de l'amour*; *L'Épreuve*; *L'École des mères*; *Arlequin poli par l'amour*. His best novels are *Vie de Marianne* and the *Paysan parvenu*. The prettiest of his acted *nouvelles* is *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard*. A young girl in the country awaits her betrothed who

¹ "It is only little men who fear little writings."

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is to be presented to her; in order to know him better, she assumes the rôle and costume of her maid, while the maid, in her turn, plays the mistress. By a strange coincidence, the betrothed is possessed with the same queer fancy, and arrives at the château under the name and in the costume of his valet, while the valet plays the rôle of the master. The fiancée is astonished and disappointed at finding the servant so much more interesting than his lord, who, in the end, as might be supposed, offers his heart and his hand to the pseudo-maid. During these combats of love, the father and brother of the girl, who are in the secret, play tricks on the young people. The whole forms a very pretty little picture which, although set in dreamland, appears quite natural.

Philippe Néricault, called Destouches (1680-1754), followed the classic rules in twenty-seven comedies, the best of which are *Le Philosophe marié, ou Le Mari honteux de l'être*, and *Le Glorieux*, his masterpiece.

Pierre Claude Nivelle de La Chaussée (1692-1754) is the creator of the *comédie larmoyante* (tearful drama), a name given, says a French critic, not without malice. *Le Préjugé à la mode*, *l'École des Mères*, and *Mélanide*, considered his masterpiece, are among the twenty-nine of his plays belonging to this new genre, which combines the comic and the tragic, and is based on sympathy for unfortunate humanity.

While Marivaux, Destouches and La Chaussée portrayed life among the middle classes, the Abbé Antoine Prévost d'Exiles (1697-1765) depicts the frivolous and immoral nobility. In his *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité retiré du monde* he describes his own restless life. The *Mémoires* include his masterpiece, *Histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, afterwards published separately. This affecting tale relates the love of the young nobleman, Des Grieux, for the lowborn and faithless Manon Lescaut, whom he follows to America in the face of poverty and suffering. The story, under the title of *Manon Lescaut*, has long been familiar to English-speaking readers. Maurice Leloir made a series of paintings depicting various incidents of the narrative, and these were exhibited in this country and attracted wide attention. It is still regarded as a masterpiece owing to its beautiful and simple portrayal of character. *Manon Lescaut* was

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imitated by George Sand in *Leone Leoni*, and the German writer, J. Brandes, employed it in his tragedy, *Der Schiffbruch*. Puccini used it for his text in his lyric drama *Manon Lescaut*. The Abbé Prévost is also remembered for his journal, *Le Pour et le Contre*, in imitation of the *Spectator*, and for his translations of Richardson's novels, *Pamela*, *Grandison*, and *Clarissa Harlowe*.

Baptiste Louis Gresset (1709-1777) reached the height of his fame with his comedy *Le Méchant*, a picture of the language and customs of contemporary society. His humorous conceit, *Vert-Vert*, is not forgotten. The subject of this poem is a parrot, which, taught by some nuns of Nevers, has become a prodigy of intelligence and devotion. The Sisters of Nantes wish to see it; so it is sent to them by one of the boats that ply the Loire. During the voyage it hears the passengers and boatmen swear and curse, so that on arriving at Nantes it shocks the Sisters by the coarseness of its language, and they hasten to send it back to its teachers. Vert-Vert, obliged to do penance, mends his ways, and obtains pardon, but dies of indigestion from eating sugarplums. The author has enameled this theme with great delicacy, and pointed it with a quantity of epigrams, brilliant, if somewhat farfetched. He later added two new poems to *Vert-Vert*, *Les Pensionnaires* and *L'Ouvroir*.

Alexis Piron (1689-1773) was quoted for his sallies of wit and his epigrams; his play, *La Métromanie, ou la manie de faire des vers*, revolves upon unusually vulgar situations, but in the matter of animation, it is one of the foremost comedies of the century. Piron was himself a "metromaniac"; in his youth, he covered with couplets and epigrams the margins of legal papers which he was given to write or copy. Having received his degree as lawyer, he wrote a brilliant ode, but so obscene, that his native town, Dijon, was indignant, and he was not allowed to practice his profession. He therefore gained a living as copyist, and continued to write epigrams against everybody. A candidate for the Academy, he forfeited his place by the remark in a visit to that institution, "There are forty of them who have the sense of four." One day, Piron wrote on Voltaire's door, the word "Coquin" (rascal). Whereupon Voltaire dressed himself elegantly,

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and came to call on Piron, saying: "Monsieur, I found your card on my door."

Piron achieved celebrity in Paris where he wrote eighteen plays for the Théâtre de la Foire and some opéras-comiques, one of which, called *l'Endriague*, is very extraordinary, and has for the principal character a monster; the names of the characters are impossible, such as: Espadavantavellados, Elfriderigelpot, etc., but the music was by his compatriot, the great composer Rameau. Piron was finally elected to the Académie Française, but the king refused to ratify his election, so Piron wrote his own epitaph, thus:

Ci-gît Piron, qui ne fut rien
Pas même académicien.¹

The lyric poets of this epoch were rhetoricians rather than poets. An exhaustion of the great sources of inspiration led to descriptions of nature without enthusiasm, and descriptive poetry—a kind of exercise in versification—became the genre in vogue. Of its numerous expressions in this period, it seems worth while to mention only the *Saisons* of Saint-Lambert—a cold, monotonous poem, of careful versification—and the copious output of Delille. This is what is called the "literature of the Empire"; and Delille is its king. It is an extremely weak literature, in spite of the incontestable qualities of a style that could adapt itself to the description of the most ordinary objects. Gustave Lanson writes: "The eighteenth century made over antiquity to its own image, which resembled it like the divinities of the opera resemble the Homeric Olympus. There was nothing but *esprit*."

The Abbé Delille (1738–1813) was one of those smart, witty abbés of whom there were so many in the eighteenth century—abbés who shone in the salons, and were occupied with the affairs of the church only in order to receive its revenues. He outlived the Revolution without accident. His poems include *Les Jardins*, *L'Homme des Champs*, *Les Trois Règnes de la Nature*: descriptions on descriptions. "He

¹ "Here lies Piron who amounted to nothing, not even to an Academician."

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boasted toward the end of his life," said Victor Hugo, "of having made twelve camels, four dogs, three horses, including that of Job, six tigers, two cats, a game of chess, a backgammon-board, a draught-board, a billiard table, several winters, many summers, a number of springs, fifty sunsets, and so many dawns that he could not count them." His amusements in the drawing room occupy almost as much space in his poems as do the rural descriptions; we feel that the author "looked at the country only through the windows of the château."

Florian (1755-1794), also, still lives because of his *Fables*, in which simplicity of narrative is united with a certain graceful delicacy and a well-pointed "moral." His *Fables* are easier to understand, and better adapted to the young, than are the more poetic and more capricious compositions of *La Fontaine*. Their titles embrace: *Les Deux Voyageurs* (The Two Travelers); *Le Chat et le Miroir* (The Cat and the Mirror); *Le Singe qui montre la lanterne magique* (The Monkey with the Magic Lantern); *L'Âne qui joue de la flûte* (The Ass that Plays the Flute), etc.

Écouchard Lebrun called Lebrun-Pindare, which name has been preserved for him by posterity not without ironical intent, and Le Franc de Pompignan wrote odes. Of the latter's sacred poems Voltaire said, "sacrés ils sont, car personne n'y touche."¹ Jean François Marmontel is remembered for two mediocre novels: *Bélisaire* and *Les Incas*. Finally, Malfilâtre and Gilbert were—like Chatterton in England and Calderon in Spain—young poets consumed by misery before their genius had fully ripened. Malfilâtre composed a pretty poem of a mythological character, *Narcisse*. Narcisse is the son of the river Céphise. He falls in love with his own image while looking at himself in the waters of a spring, to the bottom of which he plunges, and is changed into the flower which bears his name.

Gilbert (1751-1780) is the author of satires. The strophes of his *Adieux à la Vie* have become classic; a well-known stanza, and which is inscribed over the supposed remains of Gilbert in the catacombs of Paris, is this one:

¹ Sacred they are for no one touches them.

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Au banquet de la vie, infortuné convive;
J'apparus un jour et je meurs:
Je meurs, et sur ma tombe où lentement j'arrive,
Nul ne viendra verser des pleurs.¹

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

On the eve of the Revolution, a great poet André Chénier, *le dernier des classiques*, appeared. Gustave Lanson writes: "If it has been so difficult to classify André Chénier, so that he has been frequently called romanticist a quarter of a century before that literary movement, it is because it has not been recognized how little the pseudo-classicists from 1780 to 1829 have the right to be called inheritors or disciples of the seventeenth century—that of Boileau and Racine. Chénier is not to be distinguished from his contemporaries, except in that he goes back to the sources of great classic art. This genuine poet who read Virgil, Homer, and Theocritus in such exquisite sympathy with the antique world, and knew how to become enthusiastic about Malherbe as well—this curious master of form who imparted to degenerate classic verse such delicate and powerful rhythm and harmony, is the very man who understood "l'Art poétique" as Racine and La Fontaine understood it, and who brought into realization Boileau's original theories."

André Chénier was born—as was his brother, Marie-Joseph, who was also a poet—in Constantinople, where their father was consul-general. Their mother, a Greek, acquainted André at an early age with the literature of her country; hence the originality of his poetry at a time when all verses seemed cast in the same mold. Having studied and cherished the literature of ancient Greece from his childhood, he was a real renovator of poetic sentiment. On his return to France, the Revolution broke out; he greeted it with ecstasy, but fought its excesses with anger, in his *Odes* and *Iambes*. He was arrested on account of some articles he had published

¹ At life's banquet, unfortunate guest,
I appeared one day and I die:
I die, and over my grave where I slowly descend,
No one will come to shed a tear.

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in *Le Mercure*, voicing his indignant protest against the excesses of the Terror. He would probably have been forgotten in prison and been released, with so many others, after the Ninth Thermidor, if his father, uneasy for his son's fate, had not gone to solicit his pardon. This step proved fatal; the very next day he was sent to the scaffold, in company with his friend, Roucher, the poet of the *Mois*. Just before his execution, André struck his forehead with his hand and said: "It is unfortunate; there was something in here." The guillotine, by cutting off that head, deprived France of a poet whose beginnings had given the greatest hopes. His ode on the *Serment du Jeu de Paume* (The Oath of Tennis Court¹), and especially the *Iambes*, written in prison while awaiting death, and the exquisite elegy of the *Jeune Captive*, are in the first rank of satiric poetry, and of the most sublime lyric quality. The young captive was Aimée de Coigny, a companion of Chénier's captivity, who grieved at losing her life so early, and wished, like the flower which had only seen the dawn, to finish the day that was scarcely begun. André Chénier was only thirty-two years old when he died, in 1794. It was he who sang:

L'art ne fait que des vers, le cœur seul est poète.²

Le Sage had founded the novel of observation, J. J. Rousseau had introduced the sentimental, moral, and philosophical genre, Prévost, the tragic passion; Marivaux, the subtle analysis of love, and with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre the picturesque and descriptive characterized the novel.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre—the greatest of Rousseau's pupils in the eighteenth century, and the disciple most directly inspired by him—is a true poet in prose. During Jean-Jacques Rousseau's last stay in Paris the constant companion of his walks was Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, with whom, in tastes and character, he had much in common. Born at Havre in 1737, he came of a family who professed to be descendants of Eustache de Saint-Pierre of Calais—famous for his devotion

¹ Where the deputies of the Third Estate took the oath not to separate until a constitution had been granted.

² Art makes but verse, the heart alone is a poet.

TRAGEDY, COMEDY, POETRY AND THE NOVEL

to his compatriots when Edward III, in 1347, took that town and, irritated by its long resistance, demanded that six nobles of the city place themselves, with ropes around their necks, at his mercy. Adventurous and undisciplined, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre attempted several careers, sailor, soldier, and traveler. At one time he conceived the project of erecting a model city on the shores of Lake Aral in Russia, in which virtue and freedom should hold sway. Orloff, the man in power during the reign of Empress Catherine, to whom the imaginative Frenchman unfolded his plans, regarded him as a dreamer, and sent him as an artillery officer to Finland; but Bernardin did not like the conditions in Russia, and soon resigned his commission. In the course of his travels he made long journeys through Prussia, Austria, and the French colonies. Everywhere his contemplative mind had been impressed more by the works of nature than by those of man; and it is these impressions and reflections that we find in his *Études de la Nature* and his *Harmonies de la Nature*. The countries he visited are depicted in his *Voyage à l'Île-de-France*; in his stories, *Le Café de Surate* and *La Chaumière Indienne*; and especially in the story—the title to his fame—*Paul et Virginie*, included in the fourth volume of his *Études de la Nature*. In this work he was able, with infinite art, to interest the reader in the life of two children whose mutual affection, brotherly and sisterly in its origin, develops unconsciously into love, and is at last rudely broken by an accidental death. The suavity of this touching idyll, to which the author has given as a setting the wild beauties of tropical nature, is unsurpassed. It voiced a protest against the superficialities and hypocrisies of society, and made a despairing appeal for nature and quiet that was re-echoed throughout Europe. The novel won for Saint-Pierre a swift and an immense popularity, and still occupies a place of honor among the literary productions of the eighteenth century. It is said that when the author read his book in the salon of Madame Necker, to the assembled élite of the social and the literary world, it fell flat. Thomas went to sleep, Buffon demanded his carriage in a loud voice, and Madame Necker superficially complimented him. The author was in despair, but, encouraged afresh by some old friends, he had the story published. In

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the first year it ran through upward of fifty editions. Every baby was christened Paul or Virginie.

This story and *La Chaumière Indienne* are the two works in which Rousseau's influence is most strikingly revealed. In the *Chaumière Indienne*, the author's antipathy to culture is also evident: an Englishman goes to India to search for truth, only to find the people imbued with the egotistical idea of caste. During his sojourn he is caught in a storm in the woods, and seeks shelter in an Indian hut. The occupant, a pariah capable of generous thoughts for those who have made him an outcast, proves to be in the possession of the true wisdom. He teaches that real happiness consists in being pure and unsophisticated. Chénier has described this philosophical story as the best, the most moral, and the shortest of novels. It is much less sentimental than *Paul et Virginie*, and is not lacking in humor; and for these reasons many persons prefer it to his more famous tale. *Les Vœux d'un Solitaire*, which appeared on the eve of the Revolution, is a chimera of social reform.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Études de la Nature* (Studies of Nature) contain brilliant descriptions, but they are worthless from a scientific point of view and sentimental to the point of weariness. He points out the harmonies of human beings in their relation to one another—the things, physical and moral, in which they correspond and differ; the similarities and contrasts which, in consonances and accords, he likens to music. Finally, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre—like his master, Rousseau—rekindled, especially among the women of his generation, the love of morality and religion. He died in 1814.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE REVOLUTION AND ITS LITERATURE

WITH the meeting of the States-General on May 5, 1789, prophecy, preaching, and the mutterings against misrule, took at last the form of action. What Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Encyclopedists so eloquently foretold had come to pass. What the daring Beaumarchais¹—the storm-bird—proclaimed through the puppets of the mimic stage, was emphasized and made awful by the mob of living men. Presently all the pent-up protests of the people against the crimes of profligate monarchy were to be expressed in acts of savage fury, unbridled license, and cruel murder, done in the name of liberty. It was not until two republics and four monarchies had been successively created and destroyed that France, with the establishment of the Third Republic, attained political stability, and with it prosperity and peace. As the literature of a nation is interwoven with the expressions of its society and government, it will not be amiss to keep in mind the state of France during these periods of conflict and change. To this end, let us refresh our memory with a brief historical review.

The First Republic was proclaimed on September 21, 1792, and lasted for twelve years, with three successive forms of administration: (1) The Convention, which condemned Louis XVI and is identified with the Revolutionary Tribunal's "Reign of Terror." (2) The Directory, established on October 26, 1795, and overthrown by the *coup d'état* of General Bonaparte on the 18th Brumaire, in the year VIII of the Republic—November 9, 1799. (3) The Consulate

¹ Napoleon I called his play *Le Mariage de Figaro* "la Révolution déjà en action."

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(declared on November 11, 1799), of which Bonaparte was First Consul, lasting until 1804. The First Empire that followed saw Napoleon crowned as hereditary emperor of the French; after gaining the mastery over the greater part of Europe, he was compelled to abdicate at Fontainebleau on April 11, 1814. The First Restoration, as the reign of the re-instated Bourbons was called, beheld Louis XVIII seated on the throne; but Napoleon returned from Elba in March, 1815, and expelled him. The ensuing period, from the middle of March to June 22d, is known as the "Hundred Days"; it witnessed the unavailing struggles of Napoleon to reëstablish his empire. With Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, Louis XVIII resumed his rule, by the will of the allied armies, and continued to reign until 1824. His successor and brother, Charles X, was dethroned by the July Revolution (July 27-29, 1830); this ended the Second Restoration, and concluded the rule of the elder branch of the Bourbons. Louis Philippe, the "citizen king," representing the Orleans branch of the Bourbons, came into power with the July government, and was deposed by the Revolution of February, 1848. He had abdicated in favor of his grandson, the Comte de Paris; but a provisional government proclaimed at the Hôtel de Ville (February 25th), the birth of the Second Republic. Its life was brief. By a *coup d'état* (1851), Louis Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon I, had himself named President for ten years; then in December, 1852, he was crowned emperor—Napoleon III. In 1870 he was taken prisoner by the Germans at the battle of Sedan, and following the capitulation of Sedan, on September 4th, the Third Republic was established, with Adolph Thiers as President.

POLITICAL ELOQUENCE AND PAMPHLETS

The French Revolution and the devastating wars of Napoleon did not promote literary development in France. But the Revolution gave birth to political eloquence; and foremost among the orators of the tribune and the pamphlet was Mirabeau, the "French Demosthenes," whose eloquence dominated whole assemblies and whose voice inclined everyone to his wishes.

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Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau (1749-91), belonged to an Italian family long settled in France. His father, the Marquis de Mirabeau, was called the "friend of men"—an appellation derived from the title of one of his works, *L'Ami des Hommes*. He was one of those anomalous beings who furthered the interest of humanity, but let no occasion pass to harass and ill-treat his own family; and he exercised, by reason of his obdurate and despotic character, a pernicious influence over his son. Fathers, at that time, had the authority to put their sons in prison when they were not satisfied with them, even if these sons were of age and married. Honoré's father, who was very harsh to him, exercised this authority repeatedly; but Honoré escaped, and settled in Holland. On returning to France he was imprisoned again, by virtue of a *lettre de cachet*.¹ Thus he acquired that hatred of despotism and that ardent love of liberty which inspired his eloquence. In his *Essai sur le despotisme* he preaches the Revolution. In the prison of St. Vincennes, where he was obliged to remain three years, he wrote his *Essai sur les lettres de cachet et les prisons d'état*, and his famous letters, published later under the title of *Lettres originales de Mirabeau écrites au donjon de Vincennes pendant les années 1777-1780*. These letters embrace his correspondence with the Marquise Sophie de Monnier, to whom he dedicated his *Erotica biblion*. When he was ambassador to Berlin, where Frederick William II reigned, he wrote a series of official reports important to Prussian history: *Histoire secrète de la cour de Berlin*, and *De la Monarchie prussienne sous Frédéric le Grand*.

It is, however, his eloquence that brought him the greatest fame. When he spoke the whole assembly was breathless with surprise and admiration. It was he who uttered the famous words, when the Third Estate, assembled in the Salle du Jeu de Paume (Tennis Court) received orders from the king to disperse: "Go tell your master that we are here by the will of the people, and that we shall not depart save

¹ A *lettre de cachet* was a slip of paper, closed by the royal seal, containing an arbitrary warrant of imprisonment or exile without accusation or trial. These letters, it is said, were sold by some of the kings for large sums of money, a blank being left on the paper to be filled in by the purchaser with the victim's name.

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by the force of bayonets." Subsequently, during a period of twenty months, he delivered one hundred and fifty speeches, always forceful and fiery. It is said that the first proof of his eloquence was furnished at his own trial for divorce, when he pleaded for himself with such eloquence that his wife's lawyer cried with rage.

Mirabeau sometimes received help in the preparation of his speeches; Chamfort was among those whose collaboration was most useful to him. When Mirabeau mounted the platform it was often after a conversation with Chamfort; it was Chamfort, speaking through Mirabeau, who said: "From here you see the window through which Charles IX shot at the Huguenots." "Facility is a fine thing," said Chamfort to Mirabeau, "provided that we never waste it." Mirabeau ascends the platform: "Gentlemen," he says, "it has been a long time since I said to myself that facility is one of the finest gifts of nature, but only on condition that it be never wasted." Yet the very gestures of Mirabeau were commands; his motions the strokes of statesmanship. It was Chamfort who translated, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death," into "Be my brother or I will kill you."¹ He was a radical pessimist who astonished, amazed, and saddened his contemporaries. Mirabeau used to say of him: "I polish my intellect by contact with this mind, the most electric I have known."

Nicolas Chamfort is not so well remembered for his dramatic works as for his political pamphlets, his sharp sayings, and his connection with Mirabeau. It was he who gave to the Revolutionary army the motto: "Guerre aux palais, paix aux chaumières."² The Abbé Siéyès's famous pamphlet on the rights of the Third Estate owes its title to Chamfort: *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat? — Rien! — Que doit-il être? — Tout!*³

¹ Herr von Bülow, the German chancellor, translated it thus:

"Willst Du nicht mein Bruder sein,
Schlag' ich Dir den Schädel ein."

² War with the palace, peace with the cottages.

³ What is the Third Estate?—Nothing!—What should it be?—Everything!

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Camille Desmoulins instigated the storming of the Bastille, and his pamphlet, *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* was influential in overthrowing the Girondists and royalty.

THE THEATER: SONGS

The French are a nation of theater-goers. Even while countless heads were falling under the guillotine, the passion for theatrical performances no wise diminished. In fact it grew; but the plays were political expressions of the day, and passed with the day.

Marie-Joseph Chénier (1764-1811) is the dramatist of the Revolution whose works most vividly portray its hatreds and its hopes. Danton said of his play, *Charles IX, ou l'école des rois*: "If Figaro has killed the nobility, Charles IX will kill royalty." This drama (1790), important in subject, but miserably executed, was immensely popular because it violently attacked tyrants, and in its titular subject the public saw Louis XVI. Chénier is also the author of the *Chant du départ*—a battle song of the Republic that made him famous, but which, nevertheless, contains no true poetry.

Antoine Vincent Arnault became the idol of the populace in 1791 because of his tragedy *Marius à Minturnes*, and his revolutionary play, *Lucrèce, ou Rome libre*. Under Napoleon he held a post of honor, and wrote a Napoleonic play, *Scipion*; but his sentiments were seen to undergo a change in his *Germanicus*, written after Napoleon's downfall. Jean Baptiste Legouvé gained favor with his tragedy, *La Mort d'Abel*; and Jean François de la Harpe favored the Revolution in both his tragedies and comedies. The political and satirical play, *L'Ami des lois*, by Laya (1793), was a violent satire on the Revolution, and caused a tumult at every performance—the royalists applauding and the republicans hissing it. With the execution of the king its representations ceased. The greatest success of the times was an obscene drama, *Jugement dernier des rois*, by Maréchal, which mocked the downfall of royalty. It was staged immediately after the execution of Marie-Antoinette. Jean François Ducis, at the beginning of the "Terror" made known to the French some

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of Shakespeare's greatest characters. When *Othello* was played and the scene of Desdemona's murder enacted, terrified screams arose from the audience, and many women fainted. The translations made by Ducis are very bad; critics have called him the Shakespearean bungler. Nevertheless, he achieved a certain purpose. Among the playwrights who eschewed politics, are Jean François Collin d'Harleville, whose most effective comedy is *Les Châteaux en Espagne*, and Philippe Fabre d'Églantine, who wrote seventeen plays, of which *La Philinte de Molière* is the best contemporary comedy. The suffix *Églantine*—meaning the golden rose—was acquired by him as the winner of that emblem in the poetical contest of the *Jeux floraux* in Toulouse.

Tout finit par des chansons en France. The royal power, absolute power, the oppression of the people, ended with songs—the songs inspired by the Revolution. In the Archives of the Conservatoire and libraries of France there have been found about one hundred and fifty such *chansons*. Of these the earliest is the *Ça ira*, sung on the 14th of July, 1790, at the *Fête de la Fédération*, the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. The words were suggested to the street-singer, Ladré, by an exclamation uttered by Benjamin Franklin, who, on learning from time to time, of his countrymen's victories in the war of American Independence, during his sojourn in Paris, rubbed his hands, saying “*Ça ira*,” “*Ça ira*” (“It will go, it will go,” i. e., we shall succeed). The music of the *Ça ira* was that of a popular contre danse called the *Carillon national*, composed by Bécourt. At first the words were temperate, and merely designed to inspire courage; but by degrees the refrains added to the song took on a threatening nature, and became more and more ferocious as the Revolution progressed. Originally, the *Ça ira* ran thus:

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!
Le peuple en ce jour sans cesse répète:
Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!
Malgré les mutins, tout réussira!
Nos ennemis confus en restent là;
Et nous allons chanter alleluia!
Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!

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Quand Boileau jadis du clergé parla,
Comme un prophète il a prédit cela:
En chantant ma chansonnette,
Avec plaisir on dira:
Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!
Malgré les mutins, tout réussira!

Later, the refrain became:

Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!
Les aristocrat' à la lanterne;
Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!
Les aristocrat' on les pendra!

The *Carmagnole* was a song and dance, rivaling in popularity the *Ça ira* during the Revolution. The original song, written in 1792, was of a military character, and received its name from a dance popular in Carmagnola, a town in Italy, but the revolutionary song *La Carmagnole*, owes its name to the name of a jacket introduced into Southern France by Piedmontese workmen. Its innocuous nature as a popular dancing song was transformed, in 1793, into the bloody *Carmagnole des Royalistes*. The refrain, however, to all the verses has remained the same:

Vive le son! vive le son!
Dansons la carmagnole,
Vive le son du canon!

The most famous of the patriotic songs is the *Marseillaise*, which breathes patriotic fervor and love of country. The words and music were composed by Rouget de Lisle, a young officer in the garrison of Strasburg, in the midst of the military preparations at the time of the declaration of war between France and Austria. Rouget de Lisle called it *Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin*. Soon afterwards, the singer Mireur sang it at a civic banquet at Marseilles, and it caused such a sensation that it was at once printed and distributed among the volunteers of the battalion just leaving Marseilles for Paris. They sang it marching to the attack of the Tuileries, on August 10, 1792; then it spread spon-

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taneously throughout France, under the name of *La Marseillaise*. Its last verse, wrongly attributed to J. Chénier, was added by the Girondins, who sang it on their way to the guillotine. The Bourbons proscribed it, but the people of the July revolution of 1830, by which Charles X was forced to abdicate, marched to its music. So did the revolutionists of 1848, who deposed Louis-Philippe. Napoleon III tried to substitute for it the *Partant pour la Syrie*, by Jean Laborde;¹ but since the Third Republic, in 1870, it has been officially recognized as the national hymn of France. Its first couplet runs:

Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!
Contre nous de la tyrannie
L'étendard sanglant est levé! (bis)
Entendez-vous, dans les campagnes,
Mugir ces féroces soldats?
Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras
Égorger nos fils, nos compagnes!
Aux armes, citoyens! formez vos bataillons!
Marchons! (bis) qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons!

The composer Salieri has used the *Marseillaise* in the opening chorus of his opera, *Palmira*; Grison employed it in the introduction to the oratorio of *Esther* (Racine); Schumann drew upon it in his song of the *Two Grenadiers*, and in his overture to *Hermann and Dorothea* (Goethe). Carlyle wrote: "The sound of it did tingle in men's veins, and whole armies and assemblies did sing it, with eyes weeping and burning, with hearts defiant of death, despot, and devil."

¹ "Partant pour la Syrie,
Le jeune et beau Dunois
Venait prier Marie
De bénir ses exploits."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

IN the middle of the sixteenth century "at last Malherbe came,"¹ and reformed the French language; and not until two hundred years later was it freed from its classic bondage. Dramatic poetry especially, was fettered by the French misconception of Aristotle's "unities," the unintelligible interpretation of the dramas of antiquity, and the imperious mandates of royalty. It became in effect a kind of court poetry, the readers of which were limited to a few thousand persons, mostly in Paris. The classic form was, moreover, kept intact by the exclusion of all foreign influences.

But with the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, literature was revived by imagination and sentiment. In the reaction from the bloody tragedies of the Revolution, people turned their minds to peace and nature, and sought new modes of expression adapted to new conditions. The terrors and the miseries that Frenchmen had undergone quickened their sensibilities. Softened by the anguish of exile and suffering, men "looked in their hearts and wrote," touching a responsive chord in the hearts of others. Along with the ideas liberated by the social ferment was mingled the influence of that foreign literature brought to France during the wars of the Republic and of Napoleon. England, Germany, and the Orient all contributed to the great change that came in French literature; most notable was the influence exercised by Shakespeare and Goethe. The plays of Shakespeare had been performed for upward of

¹ Boileau.

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a century before they were known in France. Not until Voltaire dared to proclaim them as works of high art, were they recognized by a people to whom classicism seemed supreme and unassailable. The *Théâtre anglais* of Delaplace, published in 1746, contained a translation of some of Shakespeare's best plays; but the works of this translator left no lasting impression. It remained for Voltaire to set in motion an influence that became world-wide; his revelation of Shakespeare's genius spread to Germany, where Wieland (the German Voltaire) first translated the great dramas, some twenty years subsequent to Lessing's "discovery" of the bard of Avon. Meanwhile, Mercier, in his *Du théâtre, ou nouvel essai sur l'art dramatique*, called attention to the plays as true tragedy, and attacked the French classic drama, with its hampering rules. Finally, Pierre Letourneur lent a decisive impetus to the movement with his twenty volumes of prose translations of Shakespeare. In his preface he says: "Shakespeare could appear in the country of Corneille, Racine, and Molière, and demand of the French the tribute of glory each nation pays to genius, which he would have received from these three great men had he been known to them."

Goethe's influence on the literature of France at this time is recognized by the French as of great importance. His *Werther*, though inspired by the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, surpassed that Gallic production in significance, and left its impress on all the poets of the early nineteenth century imbued with the sentiment of *Weltschmerz*. Napoleon greatly admired *Werther*. It was one of the few books he carried with him on his campaigns, and it was the subject of an animated discussion when he met Goethe in Erfurt. *Werther* affected the fashions as well as the literature of the French: the Werther costume and the hat à la Charlotte were much in vogue. Yet it must be admitted that Goethe's infinitely greater work, *Faust*, although translated some sixty times into French, achieved its greatest popularity in France through Gounod's operatic treatment of the Gretchen episode. The public, naturally, devours a novel in preference to philosophical poetry. Both Shakespeare and Goethe have been well translated and interpreted in France by A. Mézières whose

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Prédécesseurs et contemporains de Shakespeare was awarded the prix Montyon; in 1898 M. Jusserand supplied a special need with his excellent work, *Shakespeare dans l'ancien régime.*"

As we have seen, the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars were not actually productive of much important literature, but prepared the soil for its production. The literature of the First Empire was singularly sterile. It found its chief expression in descriptive poetry and in metrical translation. Its most honored exponents were petty poets, story writers, anecdote mongers, composers of the semi-elegiac—men like Fontanes, Arnault, Parny, Andrieux, and Delille, yet they were already antiquated. The advent of a new society, with new ideas and new tastes, was bound to introduce a new literary form.

However, at first, the reformers had few disciples. Under the Republic and the Empire, minds which were absorbed in political convulsions, and eager for glory, had little leisure for poetic works; literature continued to be only a faint copy of the two preceding centuries. It was during the peaceful years of the Restoration that it began to take on a new character: so long separated by war from the other states of Europe, the French now hastened to renew that intercourse which is the life of nations. They came to know the ancient and modern treasures of Germany and England; the sixteenth century was made an object of study, and the productions of the Middle Ages, so long ignored, were studied anew. The French mind thus prepared, the innovators undertook to introduce into poetry more imagination, more feeling and contemplation, and that individualism which marked the re-awakening of lyric poetry. They received the name of Romanticists, and their merit consisted in freeing poetry from the restricting rules of classicism; they enriched the language, making truth and nature the essential features of form and topic, and thereby created a literature for the people. Yet this desire to create strong impressions and to lay hold of the popular imagination often led to grave faults, among them that of overstepping the normal. The subjects then became grotesque and loathsome, the language lost its simplicity and lucidity, and the style was involved and ambiguous. Victor

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Hugo declared that the characteristic and not the beautiful, the realistic and not the ideal things of life should be portrayed. This naturally led into the paths of realism.

The romantic school originated in Germany, toward the end of the eighteenth century with a number of poets, critics, and philosophers: August von Schlegel, Tieck, Novalis, Schelling, and others. Its greatest German representatives were Goethe and Schiller. These men worked to repudiate the French classic influence to which their literature,¹ as well as the English, had been subjected since the seventeenth century. They assumed the name romantic, as pertaining to the signification evolved from romances—fabulous, fantastic, poetically fanciful—the popular literature of the Middle Ages. This name was introduced into France by Madame de Staël, and given to a similar school. In France the movement was not accomplished until another revolution—confined, however, to literary territory—had occurred: the bitter fight between the adherents of the old classic school and those of the new school—the Romanticists. It raged from 1820 to 1830, the Romanticists finally winning a victory with the memorable performance of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* at the Théâtre-Français. A petition signed by seven Classicists² had been sent to King Charles X, asking that his theater at least be reserved exclusively for the classic drama; but the king answered that in the playhouse his position was but that of any other citizen. So the performance took place; and those who would learn the incidents of that eventful evening will be repaid by the perusal of Théophile Gautier's *Histoire du Romantisme*.

The reaction in literature spread to the arts and sciences. David d'Angers was deposed—David, dictator of arts during the Revolution and the Empire, who was celebrated for the classic purity of his drawings; the rebels against the antique were led by artists such as Delacroix, Gros, Géricault. In music the foremost innovators were Chopin, Von Weber,

¹ French language in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, says A. Rambaud, "became the language of diplomacy, of the courts, of philosophy, of science, and of society, to that degree that the European aristocrats forgot their national languages."

² Lemercier, Viennet, Arnault, Jouy, Leroy, Jay, and Andrieux.

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Wagner, Schumann. The science born with the century had its share in the new order, and its effect was visible in history and literary criticism.

To return to literature, it may be divided in the nineteenth century into three periods. The first—the romantic period—extends to 1850; the second—the naturalistic period—to 1880; the third period is difficult to define concretely as it embraces various artistic tendencies. The chief precursor of romanticism was J. J. Rousseau. The two great pioneers of the new movement were Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël, in the very beginning of the century, although the literary traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued to play an important rôle for the next thirty years. These two authors were followed by the Romanticists proper: Lamartine, Victor Hugo, de Vigny, de Musset, and the rest. The later Romanticists—Gautier, Balzac, George Sand, Flaubert—were affected by influences, very foreign to romanticism, which announced a new art. Chateaubriand created a world of images by associating the Christian Middle Ages with pagan antiquity. He sought to awaken in men strong and generous beliefs; to lead them to religion through nature and poetry. He expounded a criticism that explored the human heart, and applied local color and imagination to historical pictures and recollections. He modified the language. He enriched it with expressions, figures, forms, of a new character; he gave prose a coloring, a brilliance, and a melody that were unknown before. Madame de Staël likewise upheld the moral as well as the religious principles which were to direct the social regeneration; like Chateaubriand, she discovered unknown realms, and acquainted France with the German genius.

Chateaubriand was the father not only of romanticism, but, pretty nearly, of all the forms of literary art in the nineteenth century. A passionate lover of every kind of beauty, a dweller in the solitudes of the New World, a writer who looked to the Orient, to Greece and Rome, ancient and modern, and to Italy—he came to reveal to his countrymen a sphere which included the whole earth. In doing so he introduced a cosmopolitan art instead of an art too excessively national. François René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, was born at Saint-Malo in Brittany, in 1768, of an ancient and noble

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family. When the Revolution broke out he was a captain in the regiment of Navarre. He left France in 1791, and embarked for North America, ostensibly with the purpose of solving a geographical problem—the sea passage to India by way of Hudson Bay. He had letters of introduction to many eminent persons in the United States. Washington, who lived unpretentiously, without guards or servants in livery, gave the Frenchman a cordial welcome, and greatly impressed him by the simplicity of his character and surroundings. Chateaubriand made several unavailing attempts to discover a north passage, and then buried himself in the primeval forests of the wilderness—visiting the region of the Great Lakes and the country near the mouth of the Mississippi, and studying the Indians whose portraits he has left us. But hearing of the flight of Louis XVI and his arrest at Varennes, he returned to Europe, and went to join the army of the émigrés¹ at Coblenz. Wounded at the siege of Thionville, and taken to England, where he lived several years in penury, he published in London his first work, *Essai sur les Révolutions*. Returning to France in 1800, he published *Atala* in the following year in the *Mercure de France*. It was enthusiastically received, as was his succeeding work, *René*; and his literary reputation was established. His *Le Génie du Christianisme* embraced these two episodes relating to the author's voyage in America. He had brought back from this country an immense quantity of literary material; and he drew upon it for all the works we have mentioned, and for his Indian tale, *Les Natchez*.

Atala is the story of a young savage girl, secretly converted to Christianity, who, in compliance with her mother's wish, has vowed solemnly not to marry. Falling in love with Chactas, a young half-breed warrior taken prisoner by her father and condemned to be burned, she lets him escape, and goes with him. But, rather than violate her vow, she poisons herself, and dies in his arms. *Atala* contains a magnificent description of the primeval forest; and in *Meschacébé* we have the real name of the Mississippi. The story exhaled the

¹ The royalists who left France in 1789 and succeeding years, and took refuge in England, Germany, Switzerland, and other countries.

wild and mysterious fragrance of the American forests and revealed a new literature. Its freshness and brilliant style announced the author's genius. In it he appears as the originator of the idealized Indian whom Fenimore Cooper has portrayed in his "Leatherstocking Series." *Atala* is still popular in France, and is accounted a French classic. Criticism is unanimous in declaring that Chateaubriand excels in description of wild nature and the depiction of mystical, passionate characters.

René is the story of a young European who finds himself beset by an incurable ennui; whether he travels or remains at home, whether he works or dreams, this ennui consumes him. A sister of René has fallen in love with him; and in order to escape this unholy love, she retires into a convent. But at the moment when she makes her vows, René hears the fatal secret escape from her lips. *René* is one of the most beautiful and also morbid works of Chateaubriand. In it the author himself appears under the name of the hero. This personal note sounded by Chateaubriand was echoed especially by French poetry in the nineteenth century, and was productive of the modern lyricism. It is René, issuing from Goethe's *Werther*, whom we see through a veil in Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Alfred de Musset. Hugo says: "You say, 'Speak of us.'—Speaking of me is speaking of yourself; humanity is a chain." The poet, in picturing his own sorrows, pictures the sorrows common to the human heart. This subjective poetry has inspired an entire school, the heads of which are Lamartine, who has feeling; Victor Hugo, who has imagination; and Alfred de Musset, who has passion.

This malady of *René* for a long time affected the youth of all countries, since we find this type in Germany, in Goethe's *Werther*; in Italy, in the *Ortis* of Foscolo; in England, in several characters of Byron; in Russia, in the works of Pushkin and Lermontov.

Les Natchez is the continuation of *René*; the hero marries an Indian girl and dies in battle. This tale, a poem in prose, is a pathetic romance, and affords a curious portrait of savage life.

In the *Génie du Christianisme, ou la beauté de la religion chrétienne*, Chateaubriand undertakes to prove the existence

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of God by the marvels of nature. This work was an immense success. Its eloquent and poetic "apology" for the Christian religion conformed to the wishes and plans of Napoleon Bonaparte, who was at that time (1801) negotiating the famous Concordat with Pius VII. Napoleon rewarded Chateaubriand with the post of secretary to the ambassador in Rome, and later made him minister plenipotentiary to Valais. But when the Duc d'Enghien was put to death by order of the First Consul, Chateaubriand at once sent in his resignation; and his discourse on his reception at the French Academy, in which he criticised the government, finally put an end to all friendly relations. Napoleon exiled the new academician, and his place in the Academy remained vacant for twenty-four years. During the Restoration, Chateaubriand devoted himself to political life, and wrote for the royalist cause his *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons*. He accompanied Louis XVIII in his flight to Ghent during the One Hundred Days, and upon that monarch's restoration was advanced to the dignity of minister and peer of France.

Chateaubriand's *Les Martyrs, ou le triomphe de la religion chrétienne* is a brilliant epic in prose on the triumph of the Christian religion and the fall of paganism; but it does not equal his other works. Before writing *Les Martyrs*, Chateaubriand had wished to see for himself the scenes he proposed to describe. He has beautifully recorded the story of his trip in his *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*. To begin with he goes to Greece, and imagines himself as the first to discover the ruins of Sparta; then to Constantinople and Palestine, where he wished to get inspiration for his work already prepared. He returns by way of Egypt, Tunis (conjuging up the past in his study of the ruins of Carthage), and Spain, where he finds the subject of one of his best nouvelles, the *Aventures du dernier Abencérage*.

Chateaubriand could embellish, through his great gift of imagination, all the places he visited, yet without lapsing from historical and geographical accuracy, or destroying the local "atmosphere." *Le dernier Abencérage* is a story of the chivalrous type, the action of which takes place at Grenada in the sixteenth century, and tells the fate of the last Moorish prince. In this fresh and touching tale the author has been

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able skillfully to put in relief the triple character of the Arab, in *Aben-Hamet*; the Spaniard, in *Don Carlos*; the Frenchman, in *Lautrec*. Dona Blanca, by her beauty and her misfortune, crowns this little picture with a vivid and charming interest.

The last years of Chateaubriand's life were filled with the editing of his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, which as the title indicates, were not to appear until after his death. They are in twelve volumes, and comprise the years 1811 to 1833. These *Mémoires* are intensely disappointing, imbued as they are with presumptuous vanity and a kind of self-glorification. Above all, they emphasize the faults of bombast and labored effort which in his other works are only occasionally discernible. As we read the works of Chateaubriand in the numerical order of their production, we observe his political evolution. In 1800 he is very loyal to monarchy; later he gradually becomes liberal, and ends by being almost a republican. He himself says: "I am republican by inclination, Bourbon through duty, and monarchist by force of reason." He died in 1848 and his body was interred opposite Saint-Malo, on Le Grand Bey, an island rock which he had bought with this intention; later a statue was erected to him not far from his tomb.

MADAME DE STAËL

Anne Louise Germaine Necker, Baroness de Staël-Holstein, was born at Paris in 1766. She was the daughter of the Genevese banker, Necker, who became Secretary of the Treasury under Louis XVI. As a child she heard the conversations of the men most distinguished in letters, science, and politics, who gathered in her mother's drawing-room. Reared at a time when mind was held to be the only thing of value, her rare intelligence had received the most precocious training. Her marriage with the Baron de Staël-Holstein, ambassador to Sweden, was a very unhappy one—and after ten years of wedded life she separated from him. Her salon became the rendezvous of all the distinguished men of the Directory. The star of Napoleon began to rise and Madame de Staël dreamed of being the "Egeria of the new

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power." But soon a silent antipathy resulting in open warfare separated "the generous ideologist and the authoritative Cæsar." And during the entire reign of Napoleon the life of Madame de Staël was one long series of persecutions and exile.

Madame de Staël was a great conversationalist. She talked better than she wrote: the animation of social intercourse, the play of repartee, gave to her elocution a color and a vivacity she did not always succeed in conveying with the pen. Her books have the fault of resembling conversations, and of seeming to be improvised; the habit of philosophical speculation has given her literary style, even in descriptions and romantic stories, something of an abstract character which ends by becoming tedious. The *Lettres sur le Caractère et les Œuvres de J. J. Rousseau* appeared when the author was twenty-two years old. The fundamental thought of her work, *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les constitutions sociales* (Literature in its Relation to Social Institutions), which appeared in 1799, is the idea of the indefinite progress of the human species. This last book did not greatly please Napoleon, and as her salon had become the rendezvous of the Liberals who discountenanced the military coup d'état by which General Bonaparte had come into power, he gave orders to Madame de Staël to leave Paris, and not to approach it nearer than forty leagues. This was a terrible punishment for her; Paris, with the conversation of its brilliant men, was her world. She went to Switzerland, and then to Germany, where she gathered material for a work on that country. Her curiosity was unlimited, and she often bored her hosts because she wanted to know everything, and to fathom all the phenomena of the German mind.

Before going to Germany she had published *Delphine*, an epistolary novel, in which she advanced an argument of Madame Necker, her mother: "A man must know how to brave public opinion; a woman must submit to it." In this book she portrayed her own unhappy marriage and advocated divorce. A trip to Italy inspired another novel, *Corinne, ou l'Italie*—interesting especially as an autobiography, and full of ideas. In this celebrated book concerning great Italians and their work Madame de Staël sought to prove that literary

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glory is not compatible with the happiness incident to family affection. In the opening pages we see Corinne—a celebrated *improvisatore* in music and poetry—about to be crowned in the Capitol, as Petrarch was before her. She is given a subject: “The glory of Italy,” and improvises beautiful verses. Her triumph is complete. A young Englishman, Oswald, devotes himself to her; and they travel together through Italy, talking of art, history, archæology, and sometimes of love. Oswald is recalled to England on a brief mission; but his absence is prolonged. So Corinne, who is of English origin, goes to seek him there, and arrives in time to be present, without being seen, at the marriage of her own sister Lucile, to Oswald. Lucile lacks the brilliant talents of Corinne, but her modest qualities seemed to Oswald to give greater assurance of domestic happiness. Corinne dies of a broken heart. This tale is an original work, and a touching one, savoring at once of the novel, the poem, and the philosophic treatise; but it has one noticeable fault: its intended enthusiasm too often seems to be declamation. In it Madame de Staël portrays her ideal self, in contradistinction to *Delphine*, wherein she describes her real self.

The success of *Corinne* was brilliant. Napoleon was so affected by the furor caused by the book that he himself wrote a criticism of it which was inserted in the *Moniteur*.

Before Madame de Staël, German literature was unknown to the French. She took a glorious initiative, and her book *De l'Allemagne* (1810) is a revelation of German art and civilization. It was a great service that she rendered her countrymen: to them she revealed the literary world of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Wieland, and Klopstock, the philosophic systems of Kant, Schelling, and Fichte, together with a highly interesting picture of the manners and customs of the German people. When *De l'Allemagne* appeared, by permission of the censor, the Emperor had all the copies seized and reduced to pulp. He reproached Madame de Staël ostensibly for ignoring him, yet speaking well of Germany, with which country he was at war. The real cause of his displeasure was the liberal ideas advanced, and the transparent allusions to his military despotism. A single copy escaped, which made it possible to print the book in England later.

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Madame de Staël had resolved to go to that country ; but this was difficult, as at that moment all central Europe was occupied by the French armies. She succeeded in escaping from Switzerland, an umbrella in her hand, as if she had gone out for a walk ; she traversed Austria, meeting with many vexations, and breathed freely only when she reached Russia. She has told us, in her *Dix années d'exil* (Ten Years in Exile), of her wanderings on this journey, and has recorded her impressions of the people and the Russian cities through which she passed. She was well received in Moscow, where the French had not yet come, and was fêted by the Emperor Alexander and his family at St. Petersburg.

In 1812, at the age of forty-six, Madame de Staël had secretly married a young officer of twenty-three, Albert de Rocca. After the fall of Napoleon, she returned to Paris, where she received a compensation of two million francs due her father from the public treasury. In Paris Madame de Staël again resumed her salon, dispersed by Napoleon, but in 1817 she died without having been able to finish her two works : *Dix années d'exil* and *Considérations sur la Révolution française*. The last-named book together with *Corinne* and *De l'Allemagne* are her three best productions.

Of the many salons scattered by the Revolution, the salon of Madame Helvetius continued during the formation of the different governments, and became the society of the ideologists,¹ who exercised such an important rôle from 1792 to 1802, and whose most celebrated expounders were Condorcet, Saint-Lambert, Destut de Tracy,² Garat, Volney. Napoleon was antagonistic to their doctrine and denounced them as impractical theorists.³

After the Revolution other salons were again formed, but with the new political and literary conditions, their influence was never again so great. The most important were those of

¹ Followers of ideology, a mental philosophy which derives knowledge exclusively from sensation.

² In *Les Éléments d'idéologie*.

³ Mrs. Browning voices the same sentiments in *Aurora Leigh* :

"Some domestic idéologue who sits
And coldly chooses empire, where as well
He might republic!"

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Madame de Girardin, Madame de Genlis, Madame de Beaumont, Madame de Custine, and Madame Récamier. Madame de Beaumont's salon called "la petite société," was frequented by Joubert, the incomparable conversationalist, and Chateaubriand who immortalized her in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Madame de Custine and her Château de Fervacques also find a place in this work as well as in *Le Dernier Abencérage*, where the writer describes a poetic rendezvous with her at the ruins of the Alhambra.

The salon of Madame Récamier was particularly celebrated. Although "la belle Juliette"¹ was not a literary woman, she was a remarkable conversationalist with a marvelous aptitude of comprehension. Her husband, a rich banker, surrounded her with great luxury, and at her hôtel in the rue des Saint-Pères, her visitors moved in a "quasi-religious awe of this rare flower of Paris." After the loss of her husband's fortune, Madame Récamier withdrew to the country estate of Madame de Staël at Coppet. Later she retired to the Abbaye-aux-Bois, a convent reserved not only for a religious order of nuns, but as a place of seclusion for the great ladies of the world, who did not wish entirely to renounce society. Here Madame Récamier continued her famous salons at which shone Chateaubriand and Lamartine, and where Victor Hugo made his début as "l'enfant sublime."

¹ Madame Récamier was the model for the famous portrait by David in the Louvre, which is, however, only a sketch, and for Canova's bust of Beatrix. The *Souvenirs et Correspondance tirés des Papiers de Madame Récamier*, is the work of Madame Lenormand, gathered from the papers of Madame Récamier after her death.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ROMANTICISTS

THE Romantic movement found its best expression in four great poets: Lamartine, "a revolutionist without knowing it"; Hugo, "an exclusive and passionate genius," who undertook to renew poetry and prose; de Musset, the poet of love and fantasy; and de Vigny, who gave romantic poetry its philosophical and symbolical form. After these great masters came Auguste Barbier, Brizeux, Théophile Gautier, Sainte-Beuve, and others.

Alphonse de Lamartine, born at Mâcon in 1790, was by parentage Alphonse du Prat; but he inherited the fortune and the name of his maternal uncle, de Lamartine. He studied at the Jesuit college in Belley, and completed his education by travel. In 1814 he entered the King's Bodyguards as an officer of cavalry; then, after two years of service, he took to traveling once more. In turn historian, publicist, diplomat, orator, and politician, he was a participant in the stormy crises of 1848, his name being a watchword of peace and security. When it was learned that King Louis-Philippe had just left Paris, he was put at the head of the Provisional Government, and twelve departments named him representative of the people. He owed this favor, on the one hand, to his moderation, and, on the other, to his *Histoire des Girondins*, which had appeared several years before, and had been read with passionate eagerness. But his popularity was not of long duration; when a President of the Republic was to be chosen he obtained only a small number of votes compared with the support given him who was to become Napoleon III. So Lamartine reëntered private life.

His first literary work, published in 1820, was a volume of poems entitled *Méditations poétiques*. This little collection,

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says a French critic, revealed to France a new poetry coming from the heart in fine contrast with the factitious and mythological lyrics of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau and of Lebrun. The editor was persuaded that this book would find no buyers because it "resembled nothing"; yet forty-five thousand copies of it were sold in four years. Its vogue, however, was ephemeral. In fact, not a few of Lamartine's productions were written with the immediate purpose of paying his debts, and are no longer read. Lamartine imitated Byron, but Byron's power of passionate speech was beyond him: the *Dernier chant du pèlerinage de Childe Harold*, and the *Chute d'un ange*, a fantastic poem in which the angel Cédar, charged with watching over Daïdha, a daughter of the earth, is smitten with love to the point of renouncing his divine nature and sharing his lot with her, are obviously weak in comparison with his models. Lamartine's *Chant du sacre*, an ode on the coronation of Charles X, won for him the cross of the Legion of Honor. One of his best lyric productions is *Le Lac*, written in memory of Elvira, the lost love of his youth. In his *Préludes* he sings:

Un vent caresse ma lyre:
Est-ce l'aile d'un oiseau?
Sa voix dans le cœur expire,
Et l'humble corde soupire
Comme un flexible roseau.

The style of these poems is easy, abundant, brilliant; yet wanting in precision and simplicity. Lamartine's rhymes are often bad, his expressions vague, and his style meek and melancholy. His great merits are his rich imagination, his wonderfully melodious language, and his harmonious versification; Lamartine was spoken of as the embodiment of poetry. He himself expressed this idea:

Je chantais, mes amis, comme l'homme respire.¹

In his *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* he seems to have attained the acme of his lyric talents. Lamartine's *Jocelyn*,

¹ I sang, my friends, as men breathe.

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a tragic poem in Alexandrine verse, is, according to Béranger, the best work of French narrative poetry.

His novels are *Les Confidences*, *Raphael*, *Geneviève*, *Le Tailleur de pierre de Saint-Point*, *Graziella*. The last-named tale was inspired by his first love, Graziella, the daughter of a fisherman of the Isle of Ischia. Among his historical works are the *Voyage en Orient* and the *Histoire des Girondins*. His literary criticisms embrace: *Le Civilisateur* and *Portraits littéraires*—the *Portraits* including Bossuet, Cicero, Homer, Socrates, Byron, Nelson. Lamartine, by way of national compensation, received the interest on a fund of 500,000 francs, which he enjoyed from 1867 up to the time of his death in 1869.

VICTOR HUGO

Victor Hugo (born in 1820 at Besançon) was, at different times, a royalist, like his mother; a Bonapartist, like his father (who was a general of the Republic); and a democratic Republican at his death.

The works of Victor Hugo, as numerous as they are varied, attest his great imagination and his extraordinary power of thought. He is one of the first among the French lyric poets; it is, perhaps, through his poetry, rather than his prose, that his fame will endure. He was a great colorist, a great musician; his inspiration is true, profound, and powerful. But sometimes his style lacks purity and elegance; in general, style with him is enriched too much at the expense of the idea and feeling. There is an exuberance of words, figures, images, found in no other French writer. In his preface to *Cromwell* he says: "Poetry has three ages, of which each corresponds to an epoch of society: the ode, the epic, the drama. Primitive times are lyrical, ancient times are epic, modern times are dramatic. The ode sings eternity, the epic solemnizes history, the drama paints life. The characteristic of the first poetry is naïveté; of the second, simplicity; of the third, truth. The ode lives on the ideal, the epic on the grandiose, the drama on the real. This triple poetry flows from three great sources: the Bible, Homer, Shakespeare." He adds: "All that is in nature is in art"; which has led a French critic to comment: "With this last principle, which ends in

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a gross realism, Victor Hugo could dare everything. He did indeed dare everything: by the side of pathetic and sublime scenes he placed enormous improbabilities, absurdities, horrors; he made to triumph on the stage the excesses of a brutal and repulsive materialism. It is to be regretted that a talent so beautiful and so great should have thus let itself be led astray by the spirit of system, by a badly understood imitation of Shakespeare. Without considering criticism (criticism never affected Victor Hugo) and the protests of people of taste, he persisted in his course; he fabricated successively several dramas based on antithesis and lyrical tirade—dramas which, galvanized by impossible passions, fell flat almost at their origin despite the uproar of sectarians. His plays are the least meritorious of his works—wanting in dramatic development, and presenting showy characters without the semblance of real life. In all his personages the studied use of antithesis is too apparent: we see in Ruy Blas a valet and a man of genius, in Triboulet the sublime father who is also a ridiculous fool, in Marion Delorme a courtesan who loves purely. Of all his dramas, *Hernani* and *Ruy Blas* are the only ones still performed, and even these are saved from oblivion by virtue of the lyric passages.” On the day of the first performance of *Hernani* there was a veritable battle on the floor of the Théâtre-Français between the partisans of Racine, of the classic school, and the admirers of Victor Hugo, of the Romantic School. Younger and more numerous, Hugo’s adherents prevailed, and the dramatic innovation triumphed.¹ His plays include: *Hernani*—the best of them; *Cromwell*; *Le Roi s’amuse*; *Lucrèce Borgia*; *Ruy Blas*; *Angelo*; *Marie Tudor*; *Marion Delorme*; *Les Burgraves*—his weakest drama.

HERNANI

The action is laid in Spain in the sixteenth century. Doña Sol, the heroine, is courted by a king in disguise; by *Hernani*,

¹ Hugo has set forth the doctrines of the Romantic School in the preface of his drama *Cromwell*. He defines *Cromwell* as “an Attila made by Machiavelli.”

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a bandit; and by the duke, old Ruy Gomez, her uncle (in whose house she is living), who wishes to make her his wife. One evening, while she is awaiting the bandit, the king, Don Carlos, arrives, and conceals himself in a closet, while Doña Sol and Hernani converse. She is ready to leave everything and follow Hernani into the mountains. But old Gomez comes in, and is furious on seeing two men with his niece. The king, who is Charles V, calms him by saying that he came to consult him on a matter of importance: the Emperor Maximilian is dead, he wishes to get into line to succeed him, and he has come to talk it over. As for Hernani, says the king, he is a gentleman of his suite; and so he is allowed to go. This bandit, Hernani, is a great personage, Don Juan of Aragon, who, offended with the king, has gone to live as an outlaw in the mountains. He returns the next day, in order to bear away Doña Sol; but the king spoils it all, Hernani's band is dispersed and a price is set on his head. Doña Sol decides to accept the hand of Ruy Gomez, but is resolved to stab herself afterwards. In the midst of the preparations for the wedding a pilgrim enters to whom Gomez extends hospitality; but the pilgrim, seeing what is going on, reveals his identity: he is Hernani. Suddenly the sound of trumpets announces Don Carlos, who is seeking the celebrated bandit; but Ruy Gomez will not violate the laws of hospitality, and refuses to deliver his enemy. In retaliation, the King of Spain seizes Doña Sol. On condition that he will aid Ruy Gomez to punish the king, the bandit's life is spared. Hernani gives his horn to Ruy Gomez, swearing on his honor to die on the day the duke sounds the signal. The duke and the brigand join a conspiracy which is on the point of breaking forth against Don Carlos in Aix-La-Chapelle. The conspirators meet at night in the vaults of the ancient cathedral where the ashes of Charlemagne rest. The king, who has gotten wind of the enterprise, is there before them; and while awaiting their coming he thinks of Charlemagne, and in a celebrated monologue asks him for inspiration. The conspirators assemble, and the king, hidden behind a pillar, hears them swear his death. Hernani is designated by lot to assassinate him. Then Don Carlos comes out of the shadow, and his soldiers surround the conspirators, who would be lost if the tomb of

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Charlemagne had not inspired the king to generosity. He pardons his enemies, restores Hernani's title, and yields Doña Sol to him. The marriage is celebrated; but Gomez, still jealous, sounds the horn in the midst of their happiness. Hernani requests a respite; the old man will not grant it. So Hernani takes poison, and Doña Sol, seizing the vial from his hand, drinks what remains, and they die together. Verdi's opera *Ernani* is founded on Hugo's play. When it came to be performed in France, in 1864, the characters were made Italian and the title was changed to *Il Proscritto*, at Victor Hugo's request.

RUY BLAS

This is the only drama in which Hugo, acting on his own theory, mingled the tragic and the comic. The action takes place in Spain during its decadence. The queen, in her walk through the park, finds each day a bouquet of flowers on a bench—blue flowers from her native Germany, and very rare in Spain. An unknown person brings her this gift at the peril of his life; the walls are marked with fragments of his lace cuffs. With the last bouquet is a note in which he compares himself to a moth in love with a star. Several days thereafter the queen discovers the unknown lover in a messenger who has come to bring her a letter from the king (Charles II), who is hunting, and does not appear in the play. The queen has had cause to complain of the minister of police, Don Salluste; she has had him removed from office, and exiled. He, in turn, has sworn to be avenged, and having by chance learned the sentiments of his servant (the unknown lover) for the queen, he manages to bring him in contact with her. Don Salluste then has his own cousin, Don César de Bazan, taken by the police and conducted far from Spain; and presents to the court his servant, Ruy Blas, under the name of Don César, returned from a long voyage. The queen becomes the protectress of the spurious Don César, and soon makes him her premier, meanwhile remaining quite invisible to him. Ruy Blas, now become a chancellor of the kingdom, reforms abuses, and governs with a firm hand. The queen, at

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the end of a scene in which he has shown himself truly great, can no longer conceal her love for him. But Don Salluste suddenly appears; he has returned to Madrid under a disguise, and meets Ruy Blas in a mysterious house. Salluste indeed wishes to lure the queen into this house, reveal to her the identity of Ruy Blas, and get her to leave Spain with him. The queen falls into the trap; Don Salluste explains how he has avenged himself, and what he expects of her. Ruy Blas thereupon runs him through with a sword, and, taking poison, casts himself at the feet of the queen, asking her grace and pardon. The queen embraces him and avows her love for him; and Ruy Blas dies, happy in this love.

In *Le Roi s'amuse*¹—an historical drama introducing Francis I and his fool Triboulet—Hugo displays his predilection for contrasting the beautiful with the ugly; it proved so repulsive to contemporary taste that only two performances of it were permitted. *Marie Tudor* is also an "historical" drama, setting forth the invented story of Mary's love for an Italian, Fabiani, who in turn loves a peasant girl. He is therefore arrested and condemned to death, but escapes.

Hugo's works in prose are very numerous, and quite inferior to his poetry. His two great novels are *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*; the others are: *l'Homme qui rit* (The Man who Laughs); *Quatre-vingt-treize* (Ninety-three); *Les Travailleurs de la mer* (The Toilers of the Sea); *Claude Gueux*; *Le dernier jour d'un condamné* (The Last Day of a Condemned Man); *Han d'Islande*; *Bug Jargal*.

Notre-Dame de Paris is one of the most powerful and most dramatic works of this type. It is a magnificent archæological study.² The story opens with the representation of a "moralité" play; then he who is able to make the most hideous grimace is elected pope of the fools. The successful candidate

¹ The libretto of Verdi's opera, *Rigoletto*, is based on this play.

² Robert Louis Stevenson writes: "The moral end that the author had before him in the conception of *Notre-Dame de Paris* was to denounce the external fatality that hangs over men in the form of foolish and inflexible superstitions. To speak plainly, this moral purpose seems to have mighty little to do with the artistic conception; moreover, it is very questionably handled, while the artistic conception is developed with the most consummate success."

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appears at a window; it is Quasimodo who is chosen, and we are astonished to see that this grimace we have applauded is his natural expression. He is the bell ringer of Notre-Dame; hump-backed, lame, and deaf, but devoted to the man who picked him up as a child on the steps of the cathedral, and also to Esmeralda, who gave him water to drink one day when he was dying of thirst in the pillory. Esmeralda is a beautiful and wild young gypsy, who dances in public places, accompanied by a goat which she has taught to imitate certain great persons and to write by means of movable letters. These gifts cause her to be accused of sorcery and brought to the scaffold. The dramatic interest consists in the circumstance that Quasimodo is forced to sacrifice one of the two persons to whom he is devoted, in order to save the other. Claude Frollo (an archdeacon of the Church of Notre-Dame), his foster-father, and the benefactor of his youth, persecutes Esmeralda with offensive attentions. Repulsed by the young woman, his passion is changed to hate, and he obtains her condemnation by his efforts. Although Quasimodo cannot save her from punishment, he avenges her by hurling Claude Frollo from the top of the tower of Notre-Dame on the very place of Esmeralda's execution. Two years later Quasimodo's skeleton is found in Esmeralda's grave.

Les Misérables, a social novel, has for its hero Jean Valjean, condemned to the convict prison for stealing bread, one day when his sister's children were hungry. He is released at an advanced age, and with a passport which, in setting forth that he had been a felon, closes all doors to him. One person, however, does not turn him away—the holy Bishop, Myriel, worthy of the earliest period of Christianity. Valjean repays the bishop's charity by stealing his silver plate. When arrested and brought before the bishop, the holy man declares that his candlesticks were not stolen, but that he had given them to the convict. Valjean is touched deeply; henceforth he is an honest man. Through his energy and ability he becomes rich, and occupies an honorable place in society, only to learn that an innocent man is about to be condemned to the galleys in his stead. So he makes himself known, and once more becomes a convict. But he escapes, and returns to Paris, in order to take care of a little girl, Cosette, whom a

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wretched woman, on her deathbed in a hospital, had previously confided to his care. After many efforts, he finds her, rears her with loving care, and then disappears that she may wed her lover, Marius, who, together with Cosette, forget Jean Valjean in the egotism of their love.

Les Misérables is a sort of humanitarian novel, containing very beautiful passages and also some unnecessary chapters.

Le Dernier jour d'un condamné is a psychological study of the pangs of death. *Claude Gueux* is a realistic novel. In the *Travailleurs de la mer* the terrible phenomena of the sea constitute the principal interest. The chapter descriptive of the fight with the devilfish is one of the most remarkable in the book. The basis of the novel, *L'Homme qui rit*, is an antithesis between moral beauty and physical deformity—a characteristic trait of Hugo's style. *Bug Jargal*, which deals with the rebellion of the negroes of San Domingo against the French, and *Han d'Islande*, whose hero is a man-eater, are examples of the author's skill in treating the atrocious and the horrible, a tendency which led Heine to call Hugo a "deformed genius."¹ *Quatre-vingt-treize* is an episode of the insurrection of the people of La Vendée and Brittany against the First Republic.

Among Hugo's critical works and pamphlets are *Napoléon le petit*, a virulent attack on Napoleon III, in which he describes the *coup d'état*. The *Histoire d'un crime* is a detailed recital of the *coup d'état* of 1851.

Hugo's real glory lies in his gifts as a lyric poet. The most of the poems in the *Odes* and *Ballades* are political and royalist, but in the *Ballades* the author has also tried to give us some idea of what the poems of the first troubadours were like. *Les Orientales* is a collection of brilliant and magnificent verses. It opens with *Le Feu du ciel*, in which the poet describes the terrible catastrophe that engulfed Sodom and Gomorrah. A great number of the poems are related to the Orient, Turkey, Greece—which was then struggling for its independence—and to Moorish Spain. *Les Têtes du Sérail*, in this collection, describes the frightful dialogue of three

¹ Renouvier declared that Hugo was "more craftsman than artist," and Amiel called him "half genius, half charlatan."

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amputated heads—the heads of three Greek chieftains hung on the gratings of a palace. But the gem of this volume is *Fantômes*. In *Les Feuilles d'automne* (Leaves of Autumn) are collected many poems of melancholy charm. *Les Chants du Crépuscule* (Songs of Twilight) are poems inspired by this thought: “Everything to-day, in ideas as in things, in society as in the individual, is at the stage of dawn.” This “stage of dawn” was not only in society; it was especially at this time in the soul of the poet.

Les Châtiments (Chastisement) is a violent satire against the men of the Second Empire, and Hugo's masterpiece as a satirical poet. That part of the poem known as *l'Expiation* is especially grand. The collection is divided into seven books, the *subjects* of which indicate ironically the different moral phases of the *coup d'état*: “Society is Saved”; “Order is Reestablished”; “The Family is Restored”; “Religion is Glorified”; “Authority is Sacred”; “Stability is Assured”; “The Deliverers will Deliver Themselves.”

In *L'Année terrible* the poet has pictured the stirring events of “the terrible year,” from the capitulation of Sedan in 1870 until the end of July, 1871. *La Légende des siècles* (The Legend of the Ages) is a magnificent and prodigious epic written as a series of narratives which embrace all history since creation. Among other poems are: *Les Voix intérieures* (Inner Voices); *Les Rayons et les ombres* (Rays and Shadows); *Les Contemplations*; *Les Religions et la Religion*; *l'Âne* (The Ass); *Les Quatre vents de l'esprit* (The Four Winds of the Mind).

Hugo's amazing egotism—a curious feature of his genius—finds characteristic expression in his poem, *Mon Enfance* (My Childhood). It is further illustrated in an anecdote related by Mr. Henry Wellington Wack: “In *Les Travailleurs de la mer* you will find the picture of a Scotch Highlander playing the bagpipe. Throughout the novel the author calls it a ‘bug-pipe.’ Some of the people of Guernsey who sprang from the North Country protested against the burlesque upon their national musical instrument: ‘There is no such word as bug-pipe; it is bagpipe—bagpipe—bag—!’ ‘It is bugpipe,’ retorted the poet, ‘because I, Victor Hugo, poet, dramatist, peer of France, etc., say so. What I write becomes right because I

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write it. The howling hullabaloo looks like a bug, and I say it shall be a bugpipe.' ”

Some of Hugo's poems are eloquent with his ineffable tenderness for children; there is nothing more charming of this kind than his verses in *Les Feuilles d'Automne*:

Il est si beau, l'enfant, avec son doux sourire;
Sa douce bonne foi, sa voix qui veut tout dire;
Ses pleurs vite apaisés,
Laisant errer sa vue étonnée et ravie,
Offrant de toutes parts sa jeune âme à la vie
Et sa bouche aux baisers!

Hugo began to write poetry when he was fourteen years old, and at the age of twenty-two he had received three prizes from the Academy. The *prix des jeux floraux* of Toulouse was awarded him for his odes: *Les Vierges de Verdun*, *Le Rétablissement de la statue de Henri IV*, and *Moïse sur le Nil* (Moses on the Nile).

These odes also brought him material success in the form of a pension of two thousand francs from Louis XVIII; and this enabled him to marry the playmate of his youth, Adèle Foucher. Mr. Henry Wellington Wack, in his *Romance of Victor Hugo and Juliette Drouet*, writes: “Madame Hugo died in 1868, thirty-five years conscious of Juliette Drouet's¹ part in her husband's life. . . . That the legal wife should submit to a mistress being installed in a house a few hundred feet from her own, and even consent to visit her and permit her sons and daughters to do so throughout a long term of years—all as a concession to the waywardness of genius—is an example of wifely self-abnegation which would have done credit to Chaucer's patient Griselda. He generally dined with Madame Drouet, often with his sons and friends. The latter would generally pay their respects to Madame Hugo first, then pass on down the street to the livelier social condition of Madame Drouet's “petit salon.” That strange and uncouth combination—the beautiful and the sublime hand in hand with the ugly, the grotesque, the uncanny—thus characterizes not only Hugo's works, but his life as well.”

Honor and glory attended Hugo's career. In 1841 he was

¹ Madame Drouet was an actress of mediocre talent.

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received as a member of the French Academy; two years later he was raised to the dignity of a peer of France. Then he entered politics, and embraced the most radical ideas; his name is identified with various episodes of the national history of France. Under the Second Empire he was proscribed for twenty years, and took refuge in Guernsey.

Hugo rose at three o'clock in the morning and worked until noon. The rest of the day was devoted to reading, correspondence, and walks; he retired every evening at half past nine. Of an iron constitution, he worked in an immense glass cage, without blinds, which opened on the sparkling sea, "with a broiling sun and a roar that would daze anyone else." It is related of him that when in Guernsey he was accustomed to bathe standing in a tub of water on the roof, near the rain gutter, even in winter when it was freezing.

Greeted by Chateaubriand as the *enfant sublime*, his literary career endured for more than sixty years. He was the soul of the Cénacle—a society of young poets whom love of letters and a certain community of tastes and sentiment brought into close relation. The Cénacle flourished about 1828, and among its members were A. de Vigny, Soumet, Sainte-Beuve, Rességuier, Beauchesne, Guiraud, J. Lefèvre, E. Deschamps, and de Musset.

When Hugo died in 1885, at the age of eighty-three years, the entire world took part in his funeral. Behind the poor man's hearse on which his coffin had been placed, more than a hundred thousand persons followed. His body, after lying in state under the Arc de Triomphe, which had been transformed into a mortuary chamber, was transferred to the Panthéon. All France mourned the death of its great poet.

DE MUSSET

After Villon, lyric poetry in France suffered an eclipse from which it did not emerge for three hundred years: not until the coming of Chénier and the poets of the early part of the nineteenth century. Of its three foremost modern interpreters, Hugo is perhaps the most popular by virtue of his variety and his command of words. In elevation of thought he is somewhat below Lamartine. Musset—who was not at first fully appreciated by the French—surpasses him in lightness, elegance,

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and facility. Rhythmically, says one critic, Musset is the most fascinating poet of France—a poet who fills the soul with his magical music. Musset was the poet par excellence of love and passion. Sainte-Beuve in his *Causeries du lundi* writes: “So long as there is a France and French poetry, the passions of Musset will live as do the passions of Sappho.”

Louis Charles Alfred de Musset, born at Paris in 1810, of a family of men of letters, was a brilliant student, and completed his studies at the age of seventeen years, winning the “grand prix” for philosophy. He tried his hand at several careers—medicine, law, banking, painting, and in each case unsuccessfully. In 1830, at the age of twenty years, he was the youngest and one of the most brilliant among the habitués of the Cénacle, in the salon of Victor Hugo. There one evening, he won recognition as a poet by reading, before the Cénacle, to its astonishment and delight, a poem in eulogy of the Master, Victor Hugo. Happy and proud at being applauded, Alfred de Musset, until then idle and dissipated, set seriously to work, and entered upon literary life by publishing a volume of verse entitled *Contes d’Espagne et d’Italie*. This blustering and mocking collection of poems was followed by *Un Spectacle dans un fauteuil*, dedicated to his friend Tattel, containing a drama, *La coupe et les lèvres* (The Cup and the Lips); a comedy, *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles*; an elegy, *Le Saule* (The Willow); and a narrative poem, *Namouna*, very much in the style of Byron’s *Don Juan*. His four *Nuits* (Mai, Décembre, Août, Octobre) are his masterpieces—the most pathetic songs that love and suffering have ever inspired.

Musset published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* a series of *Nouvelles* and stories which were later combined in two volumes. The *Poésies Nouvelles* express all the melancholy, bitter regret, and lost hopes that his heart contained. His graceful *Comédies et Proverbes* are dramatic pieces which he had not written to be performed. *On ne badine pas avec l’amour* (Trifle not with Love), perfect in conception and language, and *La Quenouille de Barberine* (Barberine’s Distaff) are among the prettiest of his comedies.

The drama, *André del Sarto*, is a masterpiece of truth and passion. One of the most celebrated Italian painters of

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the sixteenth century, André, has received from Francis I of France considerable sums of money with which to buy pictures in Italy. His young wife loves pleasure, and André gratifies her cravings without counting the cost—promising himself to make good by his work what she has spent. Confronted with the loss of his honor, he discovers at the same time that this woman, for whom he sacrificed so much, loves another—his favorite pupil, whom he had brought up in his own house. The sorrow of the old painter is the more poignant inasmuch as he can blame neither his wife nor her lover, who have not ceased to respect and venerate him. So he leaves them free to marry by killing himself.

In prose de Musset wrote a great autobiographic novel, *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, in which, under the transparent veil of romance, he narrates the history of his stormy youth. It is the record of the disenchantment he experienced during his breaking off with George Sand, who had taken care of him when he was dangerously ill at Venice. They soon separated, but the following year, in Paris, they were again the best of friends. In his *Lettres de Dupuis à Cotonnet*, Musset pokes fun at the Romanticists.

Musset's is an original lyric talent compounded of strangeness and beauty. He set great store by his originality, and indignantly denied that in *Namouna* he had imitated Byron. In verses addressed to a friend he says:

On m'a dit l'an passé que j'imitais Byron;
Vous, qui me connaissez, vous savez bien que non.
Je haïs comme la mort l'état de plagiaire;
Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre.¹

Again:

Byron, me direz-vous, m'a servi de modèle.
Vous ne savez donc pas qu'il imitait Pulci?
Rien n'appartient à rien, tout appartient à tous.
C'est imiter quelqu'un que de planter des choux.²

¹ It has been said to me in the past year that I imitate Byron; you who know me, know well that it is not so. I have a mortal hatred for plagiarism; my glass is not large, but I drink in my (own) glass.

² Byron, you tell me, has served me as a model.
Do you not know then that he imitated Pulci?
Nothing belongs to anybody, everything belongs to everybody.
Planting cabbages is imitating somebody.

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This was a variation of Molière's famous saying: "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve" ("I take my own where I find it"); nevertheless, we cannot help perceiving that his *Mardoche* and *Namouna* are very much in the manner of Byron.

Musset took especial delight in scoffing at the critics. In his *Ballade à la Lune*, he commences by putting this strophe before them to feed on:

C'était dans la nuit brune;
Sur un clocher jauni
La lune
Comme un point sur un i . . . etc.

We can imagine the concert of critical declamation that this violation of the classic rules provoked. The poet, who had sought to mystify his critics, replied:

On dit, maîtres, on dit qu' alors votre sourcil,
En voyant cette lune et ce point sur cet i,
Prit l'effroyable aspect d'un accent circonflexe.¹

A critic says of de Musset: "He is an adorable and impertinent frolicsome child; he defies, braves, and banters at the same time the bewildered reader, who tires himself out trying to follow him in his rapid and fantastic course.

Musset died in 1857, and was buried in the Père-Lachaise, where, according to his wish, expressed in his poem *Lucie*, a weeping willow shades his grave: "où la bouche sourit et les yeux vont pleurer," with the following stanza carved in the stone:

Mes chers amis, quand je mourrai;
Plantez un saule au cimetière.
J'aime son feuillage éploré,

¹ These verses and the preceding ones, rather too fantastic for successful rendering into English, are easy to understand however: "The moon standing out in the sky over a steeple and looking like a dot over an i"; and "'tis said, my masters, that upon seeing that moon and that dot over the i, your brows knit into a frightful circumflex accent."

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Sa pâleur m'en est douce et chère,
Et son ombre sera légère
A la terre où je dormirai.

"Be assured," says Rocheblave, "that, on calm nights, the somber yew tree of Nohant¹ and the pale willow of Père Lachaise bend toward each other, attracted, as it were, by instinct; and that, despite the distance, the same caressing breeze comes to kiss them and murmur in their foliage fraternal words."²

ALFRED DE VIGNY

Count Alfred de Vigny was born of a patrician family, at Loches in Touraine, in 1797. His father was an old cavalry officer, distinguished in the Seven Years' War; his mother was the daughter of an admiral. In his youth he was fed with tales of battle and the sea. "I always loved to listen," he has said, "and when I was a child I early contracted the taste for these things while seated on the wounded knees of my old father. At first he told me stories of his campaigns, and, on his lap, I found war seated beside me. He showed me war in his wounds, war in the parchments and blazons of his fathers, war in the great ancestral portraits of men in armor, which were hung in Beauce in an old château."

Alfred de Vigny was a royal musketeer, then an infantry captain; but, a stranger to every favor, he retired from the service in 1828, to devote himself more freely to poetry. At the age of twenty-six years, his beautiful imagination had already taken its poetic flight; and when Victor Hugo, at the height of his glory, opened his salon to younger talent, de Vigny was among the first in the Cénacle.

An adept in Romanticism, de Vigny approaches the classic by his carefulness of form and the elegance of his verse; his

¹ George Sand is buried there, with a yew tree on her tomb.

² The best translation of lyric poetry is necessarily such a feeble rendering of the original that it is quite impossible for readers unfamiliar with French to comprehend the poetic genius of Hugo and Musset. It may be added that Taine, while admitting that France has produced no great poet, puts Musset above Tennyson.

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lyric poems have an exquisite grace and purity. He drew his inspiration from the Bible, Dante, Milton, Klopstock and Ossian. The majority of the poems in *Poèmes antiques et modernes* were written during the military life of the author, and were reclassified as follows: *Poèmes mystiques: Moïse, Éloa, Le Déluge*; *Poèmes Antiques: La Fille de Jephté, La femme adultère, Le Bain de Suzanne, La Dryade, La Somnambule, Le Bain d'une dame romaine, Symetha*; *Poèmes modernes: La Neige, Le Cor, Le Bal, Dolorida, Madame de Soubise, La Prison, Le Trappiste, La Sérieuse*.

Moïse is the eternal complaint of genius misunderstood by the masses:

Et, debout devant Dieu, Moïse ayant pris place,
Dans le nuage obscur lui parlait face à face.
Il disait au Seigneur: "Ne finirai-je pas?
Je vivrai donc toujours puissant et solitaire,
Laissez-moi m'endormir du sommeil de la terre."¹

La Neige is a tradition of the love of Eginhard and Emma, daughter of Charlemagne. *La Sérieuse* is a magnificent picture of the poetic side of a sailor's life. The subject of *Le Cor* is the death of Roland at Roncevaux.

The scene of the longest of these poems, *Éloa, ou la sœur des anges*, takes place in the celestial world, in the midst of the stars and planets. Eloa is an angel, born of a tear which Jesus shed at the death of Lazarus, and to which God gave life. In converse with her sisters, she has heard the chief of the fallen angels spoken of; and she feels that if she saw this great culprit, she would console him, and lead him back to righteousness. Tormented with this thought she wanders in the solitudes of the sky. One day she meets an angel of brilliant beauty and seductive melancholy. They converse; then, seeing that she cannot save Satan, Eloa perishes with him.

In his last volume of verse, *Les Destinées*, de Vigny becomes the "poet of despair"—a great philosophic poet with

¹ And, standing before God, Moses
Spoke to Him face to face in the dark cloud.
He said to the Lord: "Shall I not end?
Shall I then always live powerful and lonely?
Let me sleep the sleep of the earth."

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a marvelous gift for expressing the infinite sadness of life. Among the most remarkable of the poems in *Les Destinées* are: *La mort du loup*, *La Flûte*, *La Maison du berger*, and especially *La Colère de Samson*.

De Vigny's novels are: *Cinq-Mars*, *Stello*, *ou les consultations du docteur noir* and *Servitude et grandeur militaires*. *Cinq-Mars* is the best historical novel of French literature; the story runs thus: Louis XIII has left Richelieu as regent in his stead. Richelieu had placed near the king, in order to amuse his leisure and to watch him, the young and brilliant Cinq-Mars, who, taking his position seriously, has sought to displace Richelieu. The king and the king's brother, the Duc d'Orléans, enter into the conspiracy with Cinq-Mars, who believes that to insure its success it is imperative to accept the proffered aid of Spain. Richelieu is warned of the plan: the king disavows his favorite, the Duc d'Orléans disavows his accomplice. Cinq-Mars is arrested with his friend, de Thou, and Richelieu has them both put to death. Episodes of this novel are the love of Cinq-Mars for Marie de Gonzague; the case of the priest, Urbain Grandier, who is put to death for having bewitched the nuns of Loudun; and the incident known in history as the *Journée des Dupes* (November 11, 1630).¹

In *Stello* the author seeks to prove that under all governments the poet is ignored and deserted. He tells the story of Gilbert, dying of poverty in the hospital, under an absolute monarchy; of Chatterton, poisoning himself from despair and shame, under a constitutional monarchy; and, finally, of André Chénier, conducted to the scaffold under the Republic. Each of these recitals is a masterpiece of style; this novel is the most popular work by de Vigny, and expresses the dominant thought of his life.

Servitude et grandeur militaires is a collection of episodes in which the author exalts military honor.

Attracted by the theater, de Vigny made a translation of *Othello*; he wrote *La Maréchale d'Ancré*, an original drama on the death of Henry IV, and *Chatterton*—brilliant and

¹ So called because the enemies of Richelieu, including Marie de Médicis, mother of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, his wife, were completely duped in their plans for the minister's downfall.

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eloquent plays only in respect to their literary style. He also wrote a comedy, *Quitte pour la peur*. His dramatic masterpiece, *Chatterton*, was received with great favor. He shows us Chatterton as the great unrecognized poet, struggling against the sordid miseries of life. The youth has taken lodgings in the house of a rich, coarse-mannered merchant, who has married a melancholy and gracious young woman, Kitty Bell. Always trembling before her husband, but full of sympathy for all who suffer, Kitty pities this young man whom all the world neglects, and this pity gradually becomes love. The other characters are an old Quaker, a friend of Chatterton; Lord Talbot; and the Lord Mayor of London, who, in a fit of generosity, comes to offer the poet a situation as *valet de chambre*. Chatterton, in despair, poisons himself, and Kitty dies.

Alfred de Vigny was a great man, a great poet, a great prose writer. During the last twenty-five years of his life he condemned himself to complete silence—shut “in his ivory tower,” enveloped in mystery and solitude. The publication of his posthumous work, *Les Destinées*, in which appears a noble and great poetic talent, revealed in part the secret sufferings, the bitterness, the disillusion and disappointment of his life. He died in 1863.

Casimir Delavigne (1793–1843), one of the most brilliant of the early nineteenth century *Pléiade*, attained the sort of popularity that is perishable: his name, rather than his works, survives. Influenced by the romantic school, he did not shake off the traditions of classicism; and so he fell between two stools. He caught the popular fancy with the political ideas of the moment and with his skill in versification; but he is no longer in fashion. After the Invasion (by the Allied Armies), he wrote a number of songs, collected under the title of *Les Messéniennes*,¹ in which he bewailed the fate of France, her king, and her people; later he published a second collection, with the same title, celebrating her victory: these poems were enthusiastically received because they expressed the national sentiment. The July Revolution inspired him to

¹ It was Tyrtæus, the elegiac poet, whose songs inspired the Spartans to victory over the Messenians.

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compose certain patriotic hymns: *La Parisienne* (the music by Auber) with which he fondly hoped to replace the *Marseillaise*; the *Varsoviennne*, composed for the Poles; *La Bruxelloise*, and others. His tragedies and comedies were staged with a success in great measure attributable to the art of their interpreters—Mademoiselle Mars and the great Talma. The tragedies include *Louis XI*—Delavigne's best play, which proved to be one of the most suitable mediums for the acting of the late Henry Irving; *Les Vêpres Siciliennes*; *Le Paria*; *Marino Faliero*; *La fille du Cid*; *Les Enfants d'Édouard*. The comedies are: *Les Comédiens*; *L'École des Vieillards*; *La Princesse Aurélie*. Later in life, Delavigne, with pecuniary regard in view, collaborated with Scribe in *Le Diplomate*, *La Somnambule*, and other plays.

GAUTIER

Théophile Gautier (1811–72), born at Tarbes in the south of France, began his career as a painter—working for two years in the studio of Rioult. He soon laid aside the brush for the pen; but in his exercise of the literary art he sought and obtained effects which can be described only in terms of his earlier profession; he was a great painter in words, a wonderful artist in his employment of color. If his work does not live it will not be for lack of literary form and style, but because of its deficiency in ideas and soul. As a journalist his contributions were of extraordinary worth; in criticism and in descriptive writing for the press he revealed exceptional gifts of insight and expression. Gautier was the doughty champion who led the Romantic hosts in their battles with the defenders of classicism; it was *Le grand Théo*, of heroic bulk with flowing locks, red waistcoat, and pale-green trousers, who dominated the *claque* (men hired to clap) that rallied around Hugo at the memorable performance of *Hernani*, on the 23d of February, 1830, and this red waistcoat obtained for him immediately a proverbial reputation. In reference to it Gautier wrote: "Yes, our poetry, our books, our essays will be forgotten, but our red waistcoats will endure. This spark will be seen long after everything which concerned us will have become extinguished in darkness and

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will distinguish us from our contemporaries whose works were not better than ours, but who wore somber waistcoats." Gautier, in turn, himself became the head of a new school, and profoundly influenced the younger men who came after him. In his poetry he expressed the transition from the personal and subjective attitude of the Romantic school to the impersonal and objective verse of the *Parnassiens*, whose apostle he was, and for whom his *Émaux et Camées* summed up his conception of poetry—structure and color, according to this creed, being more important than sentiment and ideas. His earliest poems include the *Comédie de la mort* and *Albertus*, in both of which the fantastic is pushed to an extreme. In the preface to his very improper novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier enunciates principles antagonistic to accepted canons of morality and upholds the fundamental plea of naturalism, "Art for Art's sake." He defines himself as "un homme pour qui le monde extérieur existe." Gautier's *Contes et Nouvelles* resemble in style and sentiment the *Contes fantastiques* of Hoffman,¹ who, after Goethe, was the German poet best known to French readers. The romantic novel of adventure, *Le Capitaine Fracasse* (the source of which is Scarron's *Roman Comique*) is a vivid and brilliant picture of the life of a company of strolling players in the days of Louis XIII. Captain Fracasse is the name assumed by the hero of the tale—de Sigognac, and it has become synonymous with boaster and braggart. In *Fortunio*, Gautier has described luxury in its extreme manifestations. Readers who have little French can perhaps best get a glimpse of this author's opulent style and sensuous imagery through the medium of Lafcadio Hearn's sympathetic translations of certain short stories—a genre of which Gautier was a master. His studies entitled *Les Grotesques* are singular examples of his skill. Besides his literary and art criticisms for *La Presse* and *Le Figaro*, a remarkable product of his journalistic activity, should be mentioned his highly original articles descriptive of his travels throughout Europe—in Spain, England,

¹ Hoffman's fantastic tales are one of the few literary productions in which the most bizarre imagination and the widest digressions from the theme do not impair the merit of the work.

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Belgium, Holland, Italy, Russia. His works comprise about three hundred volumes. Gautier had merits and defects that have given rise to no little confusion of critical opinion; but his mastery of style and form, and his ability to make the reader share in his power of visualization seem to establish his fame as something more than ephemeral, and ought to have secured for him, it would seem, a seat in the Academy.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HUMORISTS AND THE SATIRISTS

A GROUP of writers who may be classed as the humorists were Charles Nodier, Xavier de Maistre, Rudolph Toepffer, and Alphonse Karr.

Charles Nodier (1783-1844) had manifold talents. He was a novelist, poet, historian, philologist, entomologist, scholar, and journalist; and he diffused his gifts with the greatest vivacity and intelligence. Louis XVIII appointed him librarian of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal; and, at the end of the year 1823, Nodier became for a time the center of the literary movement which had taken the name of Romanticism, his salon being the rendezvous of the Cénacle. Alfred de Musset loved to recall those days to Nodier:

Lorsque rassemblés sous ton aile paternelle,
Échappés de nos pensions
Nous dansions,
Gais comme l'oiseau sur la branche,
Le dimanche,
Nous rendions parfois matinal
L'Arsenal!¹

Nodier encouraged all these young and enthusiastic writers by his example. He had written so much that he himself did not know the names of all his works. What he published was sufficient to make a library. Nodier was a brilliant stylist and a most successful writer of fantastic short stories: *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail*, in which a little Scotch imp is in love with Jeanne, the farmer's wife; *Histoire d'un*

¹ Nodier's salon was called the *Arsenal*, name of the *Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal*, of which he was the librarian.

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roi de Bohême et de sept châteaux, a quaint fantasy in the manner of Sterne; *Mademoiselle de Marsau*; *Les quatre talismans*; *La Neuvaïne de la Chandeleur*; *Le Chien de Brisquet*; *Smarra, ou les démons de la nuit*. Among his other works are: *Le Dernier banquet des Girondins*; *Etudes sur la Révolution française*; *Jean Sbogor*, the story of a robber chieftain—copied after Schiller's *Karl Moor*. Nodier also wrote a *Dictionnaire des onomatopées de la langue française*, *Mélanges tirés d'une petite bibliothèque*, and a *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française*.

Vapereau says: "Allowing for the publications inspired by circumstances, and improvised under the influence of the impressions or even of the interest of the moment, there remains in the person of Charles Nodier one of the most charming and delicate of our story writers. He was a true chiseler of the language, and his most whimsical works are those which are the most carefully worked out. Open to the most diverse influences, and suited to transmit them all, he represents very well the convulsive epoch into which he was thrown, and is one of the masters of his generation in literature. He has the curious, mobile, capricious, humoristic spirit; he has the love of paradox, and yet the feeling for regularity; ardor yet patience; the requisite reverence for the traditions of the language and literature. An observer of the beginnings of French Romanticism, he excites and encourages it, but does not enter its ranks; he springs directly from those masters, ancient or modern, national or foreign, who have united form with the caprices of the imagination."

But Nodier lacked conception, seriousness, and force. For him form was all; the graces of the language were his passion. Very well versed in the French language, he was an excellent writer, and restored to current usage a number of words fallen into desuetude at the end of the eighteenth century. It is said that in order to improve his handwriting he copied thrice the *Gargantua* and *Pantagrue* of Rabelais, thus acquiring a command of sixteenth century words and phrases which he put into circulation, greatly to the enrichment of the language.

Count Xavier de Maistre was born in 1763 at Chambéry, Savoy, but lived most of his life in Russia. He wrote several

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little works distinguished by naïveté, grace, and simplicity. The *Voyage autour de ma chambre* has immortalized the name of its author. This literary trifle, in the manner of Sterne, abounds in delightful observations, expressed in a delicate, lucid style. Since Hamilton¹ no foreigner had written French with equal grace and lightness. He published also: *L'Expédition nocturne*; *Le Lépreux de la cité d'Aoste*, an admirable moral analysis; *Les Prisonniers du Caucase*, in which are described the adventures of an officer who succeeds, by dint of bravery and skill, in escaping from the hands of the Tchétchenques; *Prascovie, ou la jeune Sibérienne*, the story of a young Siberian girl who came to St. Petersburg, alone and on foot from Tobolsk, to ask for her father's pardon from the Emperor Paul. De Maistre's complete works fill but one large volume.

Rudolph Toepffer, born in Geneva, in 1799, was first introduced to the French in a letter written by Xavier de Maistre, commending him as a writer of his own school. Sainte-Beuve pronounced Toepffer's tale, *Le Presbytère*, a masterpiece; this work along with the *Bibliothèque de mon oncle*, won him recognition. *La Traversée*, *L'Héritage*, *Rose et Gertrude*—collected under the title of *Nouvelles genevoises*—are all charming reveries in which mirth and melancholy, didacticism and ironical humor, are happily mingled. His *Menus propos d'un peintre genevois* are humorous art talks. Toepffer was an artist as well as a writer and a master at an excellent school; and his illustrations for the *Voyages en zigzag* (descriptive of summer journeys with his pupils) enhance the pleasing quality of these narratives. His album of caricatures with fantastic text attracted the attention of Goethe.

Alphonse Karr (born 1801), the humorist of the romantic school, gained reputation as a satirist of society; in his declining years he turned to the culture of flowers at Nice—deriving a respectable income from the sale of artistic bouquets. Karr's first literary success was inspired by his emotions on being jilted by his sweetheart, who had promised to wait un-

¹ The French author, Count Anthony Hamilton, born in Ireland, son of Sir George Hamilton, and brother-in-law of the Comte de Gramont, whose *Mémoires* he wrote.

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til he had made his fortune: his *Sous les tilleuls*—a poem which he afterwards turned into prose—was his ironic answer to her inconstancy. In other stories, too, he has drawn upon his own life for “copy.” The *Chemin le plus court*, which proved very successful, sets forth the miseries of unhappy marriage. His epistolary tale, *Voyage autour de mon jardin*, is an engagingly humorous account of flowers and insects, interleaved with stories grave and gay. *Geneviève* is his most poetic work, and *Fort en thème*, the one by which he is perhaps best known. The scenes of nearly all his tales are on the seashore of Normandy. For several years he followed his pet pursuit of social satirist in a very bright and readable monthly journal, *Les Guêpes* (The Wasps), of which he was editor and publisher. It enjoyed a large circulation, and made him many enemies.

Béranger and Barbier, poets, and Courier, political pamphleteer, were the most daring satirists of the age.

Béranger, the supreme *chansonnier* of France, though regarded as a classicist, found admirers among the adherents of the Romantic school. He appealed not only to the popular ear, but to poets as well. Heine adored him; Goethe knew his songs by heart. “Wise and prudent like Franklin,” remarks one critic, “amiable epicurean like Horace and La Fontaine, Béranger lifted up the song to the dignity of the ode.” For fifteen years he tried his hand at all kinds of poetry, from the idyl to the epic, before he discovered that the chanson was his natural medium of expression. As he himself says in his beautiful poem, *La Vocation*:

Jeté sur cette boule
Laid, chétif et souffrant:
Étouffé dans la foule
Faute d'être assez grand;
Une plainte touchante
De ma bouche sortit.
Le bon Dieu me dit: “Chante,
Chante, pauvre petit!

His songs produced a more powerful effect than any satirist in prose may hope to attain; for prose satire is read by the few, whereas song “is made for the masses, and, with

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the aid of music and the refrain, it runs, it flies, it engraves itself on the memories of all." In his refrains, Béranger usually expresses the whole intent of his songs. They reflect the life of the people:

Mes chansons c'est moi.

Le peuple c'est ma muse.¹

Pierre Jean de Béranger, the son of an impoverished nobleman, was born in Paris in 1780 at the house of his grandfather, a poor tailor. In his youth he knew great misery, and was educated chiefly by his own efforts. At last, in dire distress, he sent a collection of poems to Lucien Bonaparte, himself a poet and a patron of the arts. Bonaparte was delighted with the poems, and yielded to Béranger his own income of one thousand francs which he received as a member of the French Academy. Later, Béranger also obtained a small stipend as secretary of the University of Paris, and he was thus enabled to pursue his vocation as poet. *Le Roi d'Yvetot*, "who took pleasure for his code," established his reputation, and thereafter his chansons became immensely popular. His satirical songs of a political nature were written chiefly during the Restoration, after the fall of Napoleon. The songs of a social character composed prior to that period embrace *Mon Habit* (My Coat); *Ma Vocation*; *Les Hironnelles* (The Swallows), a favorite with the French soldiers in Algiers; *Le Grenier* (The Garret); *Le Dieu des bonnes gens*; *Le vieux sergent*; *La Grand-Mère*. Some of his love songs are lewd and vulgar. His satirical songs include: *Les Enfants de la France*; *La Cocarde blanche* (The White Cockade), directed against the royalist banquet celebrating the anniversary of the entry of the allied forces into Paris; *Nabuchodonosor*, a formidable mockery of Louis XVIII; *Le Marquis de Carabas*, and *La Sainte-Alliance barbaresque*.

Béranger was the most inspired of the panegyrists of Napoleon I; he glorified the *Petit Caporal* in many songs, and thus created a veritable Napoleon Cult. The titles of

¹ My songs are myself.

The people, that's my muse.

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some of these famous chansons are: *Les souvenirs du peuple*; *Le cinq mai*; *Il n'est pas mort*; *Le vieux drapeau* (The old flag); *Les deux grenadiers*. Perhaps the most touching of them all is the one on the return of the exiled Napoleon to France:

France adorée!
Douce contrée!
Puissent tes fils te revoir ainsi tous!
Enfin j'arrive,
Et sur la rive
Je rends au ciel, je rends grâce à genoux.

Béranger composed a bewildering variety of chansons.¹ We mention a few more titles: *Roger Bontemps*; *Jeanne la Rousse* (Red-haired Joan); *Les Gueux* (The Beggars); *Les Adieux de Marie Stuart*; *Le Juif-Errant* (The Wandering Jew); and finally *La Sainte-Alliance*, which begins with the beautiful lines:

J'ai vu la Paix descendre sur la terre,
Semant de l'or, des fleurs et des épis.
L'air était calme, et du dieu de la guerre
Elle étouffait les foudres assoupis.
Ah! disait-elle, égaux par la vaillance,
Français, Anglais, Belge, Russe ou Germain,
Peuples, formez une sainte alliance,
Et donnez-vous la main.

During the Restoration, Béranger attacked the policy of the Bourbons, and worked assiduously for their downfall. With this purpose he chose the greatest of all weapons, satire; for there are many who

Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
Are touched and shamed by ridicule alone.

For these attacks he was twice imprisoned and fined, once

¹ At his death, in 1857, he left, in addition to his biography, some ninety unpublished songs.

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on account of the song, *L'Enrhumé*, in which two dotted lines were sufficient to convict him of lèse-majesté:

Mais la Charte encor nous défend;
Du roi c'est l'immortel enfant.
Il l'aime, ou le présume.

.
Amis, c'est là,
Oui, c'est cela,
C'est cela qui m'enrhumé.

His last sentence of imprisonment was for nine months, with the additional penalty of ten thousand francs' fine; but this only seemed to heighten his popularity. His punishment was transformed into a veritable triumph: the great men of the day came to pay him homage in his prison; Victor Hugo, Dumas, de Vigny, and his many more obscure admirers sent him delicacies; the young people of France opened a subscription which in a few days was sufficient to pay the fine. His imprisonment, far from intimidating him, inspired him to launch his bitterest satire against the enemy from within his prison walls, and the people applauded his courage.

Béranger several times refused the offer of membership in the French Academy. He seemed to prefer the atmosphere of the *Caveau*, a Parisian literary and convivial club of which Désaugiers was the president.¹ The majority of French critics do not acknowledge Béranger as a poet of the first rank; the English critic, Saintsbury, is disposed to ridicule the critical French attitude of grudging appreciation of Béranger. He "was not in the least a literary poet," says Professor Saintsbury. "But there is room in literature for other than merely literary poets, and among these Béranger will always hold a very high place." His songs thrilled the multitude, and for many years after his death, in 1857, he was the idol of the people, whose emotions he so characteristically expressed.

Paul-Louis Courier de Méré (1722-1825), the wittiest and

¹ This club, founded in 1729 by Piron, the elder Crébillon, Collé, and others, was dissolved in 1739 and reorganized some twenty years later by Pelletier, the younger Crébillon, Marmontel, and their companions.

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most gifted prose writer and a defender of liberal ideas, reached middle age before he discovered that he had a genius for political satire. When this was fully established by his *Pétition aux deux Chambres*, descriptive of the crimes of the "White Terror,"¹ he published pamphlet after pamphlet against the government of the Restoration—pouring into the wounds made by Béranger the salt of his own biting prose. His style, of marvelous simplicity and directness, and glittering with epigrams, was that of the *Satire Ménippée*; he had the wit of Rabelais, the irony of Junius. Courier had served in the army under Napoleon, but during the Restoration he resigned his commission to engage in farming on his little estate at Veretz in Touraine. It was under the name of Paul-Louis, vigneron (wine grower) that he issued his most sensational pamphlet, the *Simple Discours*, in criticism of the national project to present the Château de Chambord to the Duc de Bordeaux. The effect of Courier's telling style is heightened by the form in which this pamphlet is cast—the author representing himself ingenuously as a peasant arguing political questions with his fellows. It cost Courier two months in jail at Sainte-Pélagie, where he spent some happy days in company with Béranger, composing another satire concerning the expenses of his trial. His other productions of this kind include the famous *Pamphlet des pamphlets* and his *Pétition à la Chambre des Députés pour les villageois qu'on empêche de danser*. His immensely clever and popular letters embrace the *Lettre à M. Renouard*, on the subject of a mutilated manuscript; the *Conversation chez la duchesse d'Albany*; and the *Aventure en Calabre*, comprised in a letter to Madame Pigalle. Under the last of these titles is related the thrilling adventures of himself and a companion housed overnight with some peasants of a village in the kingdom of Naples: Courier and his comrade are overcome with terror when their host, in the middle of the night, ascends a ladder to their room, and, with a large knife in his hand, stealthily approaches their bed—in order to cut down a ham that happens to be hanging above them.

¹ The *Terreur blanche* was a term applied to the period of excesses committed by the Royalists during the first years of the Restoration.

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It was the opinion of Sainte-Beuve that Courier would endure as a rare and unique example in French literature.

Auguste Barbier (1805–82), a young poet of little reputation, “awoke to find himself famous” with the publication of his satires entitled *Iambes*.¹ These appeared in 1831, a year after the July Revolution. Brilliant in rhetoric and pungent with a satire worthy of Juvenal, the poems made a tremendous sensation; nothing comparable to them had been produced in France. The *Iambes* were directed against Louis-Philippe, and exposed the corruption and weakness of the government. In all, there are nineteen of these poems. *La Curée* satirizes the office-seeking courtiers who waxed rich under the new government without having taken part in the war. *La Curée* is a striking picture of the corruption of Paris, *Melpomène* an eloquent censure of the debaucheries that dishonored the theater at this time. In *L’Idole*, Barbier bitterly attacks Napoleon I upon the occasion of the erection of his statue on the Colonne Vendôme. He calls him a scourge of God—a figure in striking contrast to the Napoleon defined by most of the celebrated writers of the beginning of the century. Barbier’s hatred of the emperor finds intense expression in these lines of *L’Idole*:

Eh bien! Dans tous ces jours d’abaissement, de peine,
Pour tous ces outrages sans nom,
Je n’ai jamais chargé qu’ un être de ma haine. . . .
Sois maudit, ô Napoléon!

Some of his other poems, notably *Il Pianto*, in which he bewails the political misfortunes of Italy, and *Lazare*, which depicts the misery of the English people, contain beautiful lines; but Barbier did not again attain the height of his *Iambes*, of which Nettelement says: “Never had French poetry shown that cynical boldness of representation and that brutal energy of expression which live in this democratic malediction.”

¹ Iambics, a metrical form first employed in Greece as the verse most appropriate to satire.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MODERN NOVEL

THE astonishing growth of the novel in the nineteenth century proceeded in a great measure from the desire of the French people, weary of political strife, for some form of literary relaxation. The response to that desire found its first expression in the portrayal of the ideal; this, in turn, led to the study of morals and manners and an analysis of the human heart: hence the novels of realism, of naturalism, and of psychology. The surpassing exponent of idealistic fiction was a woman—George Sand. She possessed a rich inventive faculty and keen powers of observation, and while her gift of fancy conducted her into the realm of the ideal, she did not fall into the exaggerations of the romantic school. A writer of extraordinary powers, she had an innate love for nature and humanity; within her peculiar province she was a master of French prose.

Aurore Dupin (George Sand) was born at Paris in 1804. She was the great-granddaughter of Maurice de Saxe.¹ On the death of her father, the young Aurore, from the age of four years, was brought up in the country, at the château of No-hant, in Berri, by her grandmother, Madame Dupin de Francueil. Free from all constraint, and subject to no surveillance, she divided her time between long trips in the fields and the books which she chose for herself. When she was thirteen years old, Madame Dupin de Francueil, frightened at the ig-

¹ Maurice de Saxe, son of Augustus II and the Countess Königsmarken, left his country on account of a political quarrel; he served France and became Maréchal de Saxe. George Sand's father, Maurice Dupin, served with distinction under the Republic and the Empire; her mother was a woman inferior to him in position and intellect, but whom he married, in spite of the lively opposition of his family.

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norance and rustic manners of her granddaughter, put her in a convent in Paris, where she spent three years. Aurore enrolled herself in the company of certain boarders who were called "the devils"—students who defied the authority of the Sisters, and refused to work. At the end of a year, however, she became tired of "deviltry," and began to like the pious exercises, and even entertained the idea of becoming a nun; but she left the convent after three years, and returned to the Château of Nohant, where she resumed the wayward habits of her childhood. Under her tutor's direction she began to read the principal works of Mably, Locke, Bacon, Montesquieu, J. J. Rousseau, Aristotle, Leibnitz, Pascal, Montaigne; and to devour, without method, the poems of Pope, Milton, Dante, Shakespeare, Byron. Her literary talent proceeds from these authors; personal inspiration has added to it a stamp of originality. As her mind expanded, the freedom of her tastes led her into eccentric ways; she began to dress like a boy, with cloth trousers and leather gaiters, in order to be able to ride with greater comfort. Her studies soon took a turn as masculine as her pleasures; a young student of medicine supplied her with human arms, heads and legs, and for a long time she kept a skeleton in her room. Her eccentric charms, her mysterious studies, her merry, free, and easy relations with young people, all this scandalized the inhabitants of La Châtre, and bred the storm of calumnies which was to break upon her later in life. When her grandmother died, Mademoiselle Dupin went to live with her mother in Paris, where she suffered keenly from the social and intellectual inferiority of her environment. She was soon married to the baron Casimir Dudevant; but this union was not happy, and she separated from him. Madame Dudevant, with her husband's consent, lived sometimes in Paris with her daughter, and sometimes at Nohant with her son; but her means were very limited, and she had recourse to several expedients to increase her income. In order to economize, she once more donned the male costume,¹ in which she could

¹ This so-called "male costume" is said to have consisted in a long coat such as any woman might wear, hair cut short and a round felt hat which gave her, at a distance, the appearance of a man.

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mingled with the crowds who witnessed the presentation of the first Romantic dramas, and in which she could frequent the streets of the Latin quarter, at night, together with its happy inhabitants. At this time she was twenty-eight years old. At first she made translations; then she began to do portraits in crayon and in water color. Finally, she tried literature, but met with little encouragement: an old novelist, to whom she had been referred, told her dryly that a woman should not write. Balzac, to whom she was introduced, paid no great attention to her projects. Latouche gave her a place on the editorial staff of *Le Figaro*, with indifferent results. It was then that she met, in the offices of the newspaper, a young writer, Jules Sandeau, who collaborated with her in a romance, *Rose et Blanche*, under the pseudonym of "Jules Sand." This was a success, and an editor asked "Jules Sand" for a new novel. Madame Dudevant submitted the manuscript of a novel which was hers alone; but the publisher clung to the pseudonym in order to assure the success of the book. Latouche arranged the difficulty by bestowing on the authoress the name of Sand, with the privilege of adding to it whatever name should please her; and so the novel, *Indiana*, was published under the name of George Sand. It created a sensation even amid the victories of Romanticism; a new talent had appeared stamped with an individual style and infused with idealism and feeling. In *Indiana* she uttered a passionate protest against marriage as it is contracted in a badly organized society. The story was a popular success; and the same year saw the appearance of *Valentine*, which contains touching situations and a delicate analysis of character, and likewise attacks the institution of marriage. *Lélia*, which is less a novel than a kind of philosophic poem, was written in an hour of discouragement. After her break with de Musset in Italy, George Sand published her impressions of the journey in the *Lettres d'un voyageur*, which made a great stir. *Jacques, André, Le Secrétaire intime, Leone Leoni, Mauprat, Lavinia*, etc., are novels that belong to her initial period of productivity—that of passion in its first outbreak. *Lélia* dominates all her works of this period, which ends with the *Lettres d'un voyageur*.

The second phase of George Sand's genius and ideas is ex-

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pressed in her activities during the succeeding eight years. It is the period in which she entered into relations with eminent men whose social and religious ideas she could adorn by the marvelous power of her imagination and the eloquence of her style. She, in her turn, became a philosopher and socialist. Under the influence of the Abbé de Lamennais, who had turned democrat, she wrote *Le Compagnon du tour de France* (The Itinerant Journeyman), in which a workingman marries a young girl of the aristocratic class. The ideas of Pierre Leroux on the rebirth of souls in new bodies, for the achievement of progress, recur in *Spiridion* and the *Sept cordes de la lyre*. *Le Meunier d'Angibault* (The Miller of Angibault) is almost communistic, and in the *Péché de M. Antoine* (The Transgression of M. Antoine) George Sand preaches the socialistic theories of Charles Fourier. Her musical preoccupations and the mystic Czech compositions of Chopin may be recognized in her novels *Consuelo* and *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, which are full of surprise and mystery. During her romantic liaison with Chopin, she took him to Majorca for his health, and cared for him there. While in Spain, she was often obliged to perform the most arduous household duties, on account of the impossibility of obtaining domestic service, such was the hatred of the Spaniards for the French, kept alive by the clergy, because Napoleon had abolished the Tribunal of the Inquisition in Spain.¹ The revolution of 1848 interrupted her democratic and social propaganda

¹ Napoleon suppressed feudal taxation and feudal rights. He held that the priests ought to limit themselves to guiding the conscience, without exercising any other jurisdiction. Conquered Spain was mute; but the Inquisition answered with this catechism: Tell me, my child, who are you? A Spaniard by the grace of God.—What do you mean by that? An honest man.—Who is the enemy of our happiness? The Emperor of the French.—How many natures has he? Two: the human nature and the diabolic.—How many emperors of the French are there? One real emperor in three deceptive persons.—What are their names? Napoleon, Murat, and Manuel Godoy.—Which of the three is the most wicked? They are all three equally so.—Whence does Napoleon come? From sin.—Whence is Murat derived? From Napoleon.—Whence does Godoy originate? From the formation of these two.—What is the spirit of the first? Pride and despotism.—Of the second? Rapine and cruelty.—Of the third? Cupidity, treason, and ignorance.—What are the French? Former Christians

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and George Sand wrote some political works. But this period was of short duration, and she soon returned to her country place at Nohant (Berri), and began to describe the customs and the passions of the peasants who surrounded her. These descriptions evidenced an incomparable freshness combined with ease and simplicity of style, and revealed a genius for the idyl. Here she wrote *François le Champi* (Francis the Foundling); *Les Maîtres Sonneurs* (The Master Bellringers); *La Petite Fadette*, and *La Mare au Diable* (The Devil's Pool)—a sketch of rural life that almost attains the simple beauty of the antique.

George Sand, in ten volumes, told the story of her past life in *Histoire de ma vie* and in *Elle et Lui*, a novel which caused a stir because *Lui* was considered to be Alfred de Musset, who had just died. The brother of de Musset replied in a cruel pamphlet: *Lui et Elle*. Madame Dudevant now entered on the third period of her literary career. It embraced: *Jean de la Roche*; *Valvèdre*, the counterpart of *Indiana*; *La Confession d'une jeune fille*; *Mademoiselle de la Quintinie*, a novel of religious discussion in reply to *Sibylle* by Octave Feuillet; *Malgré tout* (In spite of all); *Césarine Dietrich*; *Sœur Jeanne*, etc. These novels are purely romantic.

The best drama by George Sand is the *Marquis de Villemer*, which she drew from her novel of the same name. Her other plays include *Claudie*; *La Petite Fadette*; *Le Mariage de Victorine*; *Les Beaux Messieurs de Bois-doré*. During the last years of her life she gave another proof of her versatility in the pleasing fairy tales, *La Reine Coax* and *Le Nuage Rose* (The Pink Cloud). Her old age was very peaceful and happy. She was of an amiable, optimistic nature, incapable of meanness, always protecting the weak and needy. She died in 1876 at her castle of Nohant, known to the people far and wide as *la bonne dame de Nohant*. A fine statue of George Sand, by Clésinger, decorates the entrance hall of the *Théâtre-Français* in Paris.

who have become heretics.—Is it a sin to put a Frenchman to death? No, father, we win heaven by killing one of these dogs of heretics.—What punishment does a Spaniard deserve who fails in this duty? Death and the infamy of a traitor.—What will deliver us from our enemies? Confidence in ourselves and in our arms.

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George Sand's literary fertility is almost past belief. She wrote eighty novels, twenty plays, ten volumes of the *Histoire de ma vie*, the travels in Italy and Majorca, besides dialogues, stories, society comedies. Yet in the forty-four years of her literary life her powers did not deteriorate.

Apròpos of the letters of de Musset and herself, George Sand wrote to Sainte-Beuve: "A true story, which perhaps masks the folly of one and the affection of the other—the folly of both, if you wish; but nothing odious or cowardly in our hearts, nothing which might stain sincere souls."

She wrote to de Musset: "Ascend to God on the rays of your genius, and send your muse to earth to tell men the mysteries of love and faith."

Musset wrote to her: "Be a brother, my great and good George. You have made a man of a child; where would I be without you, my love? Look where you took me, and where you left me. How you took me by the hand to replace me on my path. . . . Think of that; I have but you."

Jules Sandeau (1811–83), who began by collaborating with George Sand, is the author of some twenty novels of provincial life, wholesome in theme and treatment, and dramatic in structure. It was from one of these that the admirable comedy, *Le Gendre de Monsieur Poirier*, was adapted by Augier. The greater number of Sandeau's novels appeared originally in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* and other periodicals; among them are: *Mademoiselle de la Seiglière*, *Valcreuse*, *Madame de Sommerville*, *Le Docteur Herbaut*, *Catherine*, *La Maison de Penarvan*. Sandeau became a member of the Academy in 1858.

Dumas père, Sue, and Soulié were the principal representatives of those Romanticists, called "les violents," whose special achievement was dramatic effect and the portrayal of exaggerated passion.

Alexandre Dumas, the elder, is without doubt the most productive of modern novelists; he is also celebrated as a dramatic author. Born in 1803 at Villers-Cotterets, he was the son of a general of the Republic, and the grandson of a negress. His preliminary education was very incomplete. When he came to Paris at the age of twenty to seek his fortune, he made application to General Foy, then a member of

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the Chamber of Deputies. The general questioned him concerning his abilities, and the conversation was pretty much as follows: "First, I must know for what you are fitted." "Oh, not for very much!"—"Well, what do you know? A little mathematics?" "No, General."—"You have, at least, some notion of geometry and physics?" "No, General."—"You know Latin and Greek?" "Very little."—"Then perhaps you have some knowledge of bookkeeping?" "Not the least in the world."—"Give me your address," the General said, in desperation, "and I shall try to think of something for you to do." Dumas wrote his address. "We are safe!" the general exclaimed, clapping his hands. "You write beautifully." So he got Dumas a clerkship, at twelve hundred francs, in the house of the Duke of Orleans. Referring to this interview with General Foy, Dumas used to say: "At each question, I felt the blood rushing to my head; it was the first time I had been put face to face with my ignorance."

Conscious of his defective education, Dumas spent his evenings in learning the dead languages, and in reading the principal works of French literature. After three years of arduous and persistent toil, he tried his hand as a writer by publishing a volume of *Nouvelles* and several plays. His first dramatic success was the performance, at the Théâtre-Français, of his *Henri III et sa cour*, an historical drama in prose. Its initial presentation was a literary event, as it expressed a reaction against the classic traditions of the old tragedy. Quite new to the French theater was his employment of historical personages, of scenes of brutal violence, of the fashions and furnishings of the period represented in the play. During the ensuing ten years he wrote twenty-two dramas, mostly in five acts. Four were in verse; one, in nineteen scenes, pictured the whole life of Napoleon I.

Among his dramatic works are: *La Tour de Nesle*; *Richard Darlington*; *Le Mari de la veuve*; *Teresa*; *Catherine Howard*; *Caligula*; *Un Mariage sous Louis XV*; *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*; and *Antony*, his most brilliant success during this first period of his productivity. The titular hero of *Antony*—grave, mysterious, always armed with a poignard, always a prey to his exalted sentiments—was accepted, for the moment, as the type of fashionable youth. This Antony is a foundling

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(but not a poverty-stricken foundling) who, on returning from a journey, finds the woman he loves married to another. He pursues her, compromises her honor, and ends by stabbing her to save her reputation. In *La Tour de Nesle*, the interest centers in a young man who succeeds in escaping from a sack in which he was inclosed and thrown into the river. The situations are theatrical, and disclose as the instigators of the attempted murder, the wife and sisters-in-law of King Louis X, "the Quarreler."

Dumas traveled for a time in foreign lands, and recorded his impressions of these travels in *Impressions de Voyage; La Suisse; Au midi de la France; Les Bords du Rhin; l'Italie; l'Espagne; l'Afrique; De Paris à Astrakan; Le Caucase*. But his fancy carried him too far; and these tales of a traveler cannot be taken seriously.

Dumas fairly flooded France and the rest of Europe with his novels. Equipped with a boundless fancy, a fertile invention, and a facility for the delineation of uncommon and piquant situations and events, he fascinated the fiction readers of all nations. Yet his novels are prolix, often containing explanatory passages of great length; were it not for his magic in making the impossible plausible, and in throwing a glamour over characters that bear little relation to life, his tales would fall to the level of Münchhausen's. As R. L. Stevenson has aptly remarked: "The bony fist of the showman visibly propels them, their bellies are stuffed with bran; and yet we eagerly partake of their adventures." Most of these novels first appeared in the *feuilletons* of the great Paris dailies; often Dumas published three or four of them at once in as many different journals, so that at the end of the year they filled fifty or sixty volumes. Their familiar titles include: *Les Trois Mousquetaires; Vingt ans après; Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*; ¹ *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo; La Reine Margot; Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*. *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *Monte-Cristo* contributed chiefly to the author's popularity and fortune. *Monte-Cristo* especially has enjoyed a constant

¹ *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, original edition, 1844, in eight volumes. *Vingt ans après*, original edition, 1845, in ten volumes. *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, original edition, 1848-50, in twenty-six volumes.

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vogue the world over, and is still devoured, even in the translated versions, by countless persons who read books only to be amused. As for *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, who that reads at all does not know D'Artagnan, Porthos, Athos, and Aramis? These stories, with the others in the series, are pure tales of adventure; whatever their faults, the author had a trick of compelling the attention that none of his numerous imitators has quite succeeded in acquiring. Altogether, the novels of Dumas brought him an income of nearly two hundred thousand francs, which was quickly consumed in ostentatious follies. His château of Monte-Cristo cost him fabulous sums; he spent money without reckoning. Hence he had to write continuously; and he wrote too much: that was his mistake and the source of his faults. He abused his life and his robust constitution, and left nothing of very high value. Often his novels, after appearing first as *feuilletons* and then in book form, were cut up into scenes and staged as interminable dramas. One of them, *Monte-Cristo*, was prolonged through two evenings.

Dumas drew liberally upon French history, and, though he did not pretend to adhere to historical facts, many ill-advised readers have gone to his pages for instruction. The historical novel, it is perhaps needless to say, is more likely to confuse than to assist the student of epochs gone by; in the case of Dumas it is not even germane to literature. In his *Mémoires d'un Médecin* he has given us a portrait of the charlatan Cagliostro, together with the story of Marie-Antoinette's famous necklace. A royalist novel, *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*, supplied the Revolution of 1848 with its republican song, *Mourir pour la patrie!*—which has become a second *Marseillaise*. This revolution, of which Dumas was a warm partisan, wrecked his fortune. In 1860 he took part in the expedition of Garibaldi, and was present at the battles he described. In the midst of his travels he did not cease to have his drama played, and to publish novels in *feuilleton* and in book form. To cap his activities, he wrote an amusing and useful work on cooking.

Our astonishment at seeing such a prodigious number of works—often three or four at a time—issue from the brain of a single man is modified when his method is explained.

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The secret was disclosed during the progress of a lawsuit against two Parisian journals which he had agreed to supply with stories. It transpired that he was not the sole author of his tales, but that he employed anonymous collaborators or secretaries, whose writings he recast. Dumas defended his course in this respect by saying that he relied on his assistants only for the rough sketch of the work, to which he himself gave the finishing touches. E. de Mirecourt exposed him in his pamphlets, *Le Mercantilisme littéraire*, and *Fabrique de Romans: Maison Dumas et Compagnie*. It was facetiously remarked that no one had ever read Dumas's entire works—not even Dumas himself. Indeed, Dumas is reported as saying of a book which bears his name: "I signed it, but I have not read it." There have likewise been revelations of audacious plagiarisms of works by Schiller, Sir Walter Scott, Chateaubriand, and others. But Dumas justified himself on the theory that "the man of genius does not steal, but conquers." And after all the *Les Trois Mousquetaires* remains one of the most popular works in the literature of all nations.

Frédéric Soulié is the author of some thirty sensational novels. A characteristic product of his gloomy imagination is his *Mémoires du diable*, in which Satan, disclosing the secrets of men's lives, reveals the vices of those reputed virtuous, and the virtues of those reputed vicious. Of his plays, *La Closerie des Genêts* (1846) conveys a faithful picture of Breton customs.

Marie Joseph Sue (1804-57), best known as *Eugène Sue*—a pen name borrowed from his sponsor, Prince Beauharnais—was also a contributor of the *feuilleton* novel. He tried the practice of medicine with indifferent success, toyed for a time with art, and for six years found employment as a surgeon in the navy. Sue's own father, before him, was a simple ship's doctor. Yet the author of *Le Juif Errant* (The Wandering Jew), who took to novel writing almost by accident, could not at first forget that his patroness was the Empress Joséphine. Some of his earlier works—*Arthur*, *Mathilde*, *Le Marquis de Létorièrre*—are imbued with the aristocratic spirit; they signalize, moreover, the triumph of evil. Later, he experienced a change of heart, and became a social democrat. We note a corresponding increase in his fortunes: to name one instance,

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Le Juif Errant (1845) alone brought him two hundred thousand francs. The imaginative qualities of this tale have given it a certain vitality; though in its grotesque exaggerations, in order to support his anti-Jesuitical thesis, the author's imagination outran his art. His *Les Mystères de Paris* (1843)—an offense to common sense and sound moral sentiment—appeared, curiously enough, in the dignified *Journal des Débats*, and was devoured alike by persons of high and low degree.

Three prolific writers who have met with great pecuniary success are Paul de Kock (1794–1871), who reveled in descriptions of the seamy side of lower middle-class life in Paris; Hector Malot, whose *Sans famille* circulated throughout Europe; and Georges Ohnet. The last-named novelist (born in Paris, 1848) is what our American publishers would call a "best seller." His popularity, extending to Germany, and emphasized by the dramatization of his fictions, has long been a thorn in the side of French literary critics. Jules Lemaitre remarks: "Il a l'élégance des chromolithographes, la noblesse des sujets de pendule, les effets de cuisse des cabotins, le sentimentalisme des romances"¹—damning specifications of literary infamy which lose their flavor in an English translation. Meanwhile, *Le Maître de forges* thrives on Lemaitre's excoriation with 250,000 copies sold; while *Serge Panine*; *Lise Fleuron*; *La Comtesse Sarah*, and *Le Docteur Rameau* have all helped toward enriching their author.

The great popularity in France of *Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*, by Octave Feuillet (1821–90), has not served to strengthen him in the esteem of his more critical countrymen; just as in our own country its repute as a classic for young ladies has perhaps distracted attention from Feuillet's more robust productions. The favor, still enjoyed, among French women by this optimistic *romancier mondain* is not without warrant. Feuillet knew fashionable society, and recorded his observations of it in a good and facile literary style. He had, moreover, his moments of power. His works

¹ "He has the elegance of a chromolithograph, the nobleness of a figure on a (French) clock, the poses of a cheap actor, the mawkishness of sentimental songs."

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include *Scènes et Comédies*, patterned after Musset; *Dalila*; *Le Pour et le Contre*; *Sibylle*—to which George Sand replied with *Mademoiselle de La Quintinie*. In two of his later and better novels—*Julia de Trécœur* and *M. de Camors*—he leans to realism.

Joseph Xavier Saintine (1798–1865), whose real name was Boniface, earned the *croix d'honneur* and the Montyon prize of three thousand francs with his novel, *Picciola*—the story of a prisoner who found comfort in fostering a flower blossoming in a crevice of his cell. He collaborated with Scribe in some two hundred plays.

Henri Monnier (1799–1877), who, in the domain of caricature and satire, wielded the pen and brush with equal facility, is remembered as the creator of the celebrated Joseph Prudhomme (*Mémoires de M. Joseph Prudhomme*)—the modern type of a self-satisfied nonentity; pompous, arrogant, trite, and vulgar of speech. Monnier's *Scènes Populaires* contain true and witty pictures of Parisian life.

Edmond About (1828–85), novelist, playwright, and journalist, has been called the greatest *blagueur* of modern times. He studied archæology in Athens, and upon his return to France published *La Grèce contemporaine*, a satire on the morals and manners of the Greeks—followed, a year later, by his best novel, *Le Roi des montagnes*, in which he described with infinite drollery the banditti of modern Greece. *L'Homme à l'oreille cassée*; *Tolla*; *Le Nez d'un notaire*, are among his other novels. His dramatic pieces, most of which were included in the collection, *Théâtre impossible*, are of no great consequence. He was a brilliant journalist, and founded, with Sarcey, *Le XIXme Siècle*—the most humorous French journal of the period.

Émile Erckmann (born 1822) and Alexandre Chatrian (1826–90), collaborators under the name of Erckmann-Chatrian, deserve passing mention for their novels of the Revolutionary and first Napoleonic period—including *Madame Thérèse* and *Le Conscrit de 1813*—in which they protested against the horrors of war; and for their plays, including *L'Ami Fritz*; *Les Rantzau*, and other adaptations from their tales, chiefly concerned with Alsace.

Émile Souvestre (1806–36), whose *Un Philosophe sous les*

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toits won him recognition from the Academy, has, in *Les derniers Bretons*, his best novel, left us some delightful descriptions of the legendary Armorica. His novels, written in a graceful style and thoroughly wholesome, voiced a virile protest against the greed and heartlessness of a time when the cry was everywhere *Enrichissez-vous!*

Jules Verne (1828–1905) has happily commingled scientific knowledge with the fancy of the novelist; and though his works cannot be taken very seriously as literature, their ingenuity, and their complete success within the intention of the author, cannot be denied. Verne, it may be said, had the scientific imagination. Employing this with no little skill, and refraining from a too great distortion of fact, he succeeded in anticipating some of our “modern improvements.” A multitude of young people have been vastly entertained, and not unprofitably, by *Le Voyage au centre de la terre*; *Cinq semaines en ballon*; *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*; *De la terre à la lune*, etc.

Of Henry Gréville (Madame Alice Durand), born in 1842, and long a resident in Russia, it is perhaps sufficient to note that she wrote a number of novels (*Dosia*; *Suzanne*; *Céphise*, etc.), mostly concerned with Russian “high life,” that were accounted attractive in their day.

Victor Cherbuliez (1825–99), a Genevan by birth, and distantly related to J. J. Rousseau, brought back from the Orient a fund of archæological information which he put forth in the form of novels—among them, *A propos d'un cheval* and *Un Cheval de Phidias*. He also attempted a kind of philosophical fiction. His output was copious—a part of it of considerable merit, but revealing a higher talent for dissertation than for creation. *Samuel Brohl et Cie*; *Le Roman d'une Honnête Femme*; *La Bête*; *Le Comte Kostia*, are characteristic. Cherbuliez was elected a member of the Academy in 1881.

André Theuriet (born at Marly, 1833, died 1907) published in 1867 a volume of poems, *Le Chemin du bois*, for which the Academy bestowed upon him the Vitel prize. Twenty years later he became an Academician. Theuriet lived in the country for upward of thirty years, and it is the country that inspired not only his poems, but the numerous novels

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which he began to write when he was approaching middle age. These tales, written in a melodious style, and portraying the gentler emotions and aspects of rural life, are restful in the reading. "His novels in general," says a French critic, "are not founded on some complicated intrigue. They exhale the sweet perfume of new hay and of ripe wheat; they awaken in the reader the memory of the mysterious life of the forest—always the same and yet so variant with the change of the hour and the season." Some of his principal novels are *Toute seule*; *Mademoiselle Guignon*; *Sauvageonne*; *Michel Verneuil*; *Rose-Lise Chanteraine* (1903).

In his discourse upon entering the Academy (in 1891 as Feuillet's successor), Pierre Loti said that he belonged to no school and knew little of the literature of the day. It is, indeed, apparent from his writings that Loti¹—whose real name is Julien Viaud—has no literary lineage, and that he stands apart in the peculiar vehicle he has made his own. An exotic, like Chateaubriand and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, his resemblance to these writers is otherwise remote. Born at Rochefort in 1850, he was for many years a naval officer, and gathered at first hand, in foreign lands, the impressions he had so exquisitely inscribed. His literary style is exceedingly simple and direct, yet so delicate and elusive in the thought it conveys that his stories lose much in the translation. Read in French, his tales transport us to the scene of his selection; and whether we fall under the spell of his sensuous sentiment, or, with Professor Saintsbury, find it somewhat "rancid," we cannot escape the cobweb of illusion that he weaves about us. Loti's heroines are, with one exception (Gaud, in *Pêcheur d'Islande*), women of foreign climes: in *Aziyadé* and *Les Désenchantés*, the Turkish beauties screened with *jashmak* and *ferejeh*; in the captivating *Japonneries d'automne* and in *Madame Chrysanthème*, the bewildering Japanese. How far this Frenchman has succeeded where so many writers have failed, in exploring the field of Nippon, may perhaps in some measure be inferred from the comment of Lafcadio Hearn, contained in a letter published by Mr. Osman Edwards:

¹ His companions nicknamed him thus because of his modesty; the Indian flower hides its head under its leaves.

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“ There is not much heart in Loti; but there is a fine brain; and there is a nervous system so extraordinary that it forces imagination back to the conditions of old Greek life, when men had senses more perfect than now. Very possibly this Julien Viaud has in his veins the old blood of Magna Græcia. No other literary man living sees and hears and smells and thrills so finely as he. . . . As for what he says of the Japanese women, it is perfectly impeccably accurate so far as it consists of a record of observations of senses. Loti's senses can never err any more than the film on a photographic plate with a sensitivity of one hundred. But he keeps to surfaces; his life is surfaces. Almost in the way that some creatures have their skeletons outside of themselves instead of inside, so his plexuses of feeling are. What the finer nature of the Japanese woman is, no man has told. Those who know cannot tell: it would be too much like writing of the sweetness of one's own sister or mother. One must leave it in sacred silence—with a prayer to all the gods.”

Loti's *Ramuntcho* is a tragic love idyl suggested to him by his long sojourn in the Basque country. *L'Exilée* contains a charming description of Venice. In *L'Inde sans les Anglais* he has dwelt upon those Oriental religions which seem to have turned him from his own faith. *Mon frère Yves*, in which a tipsy sailor marries a girl in every port where his ship touches, and *Pêcheur d'Islande*, the pathetic tale of a Breton fisherman sent to Iceland, are wonderful tales of the sea.

Anatole Thibaut (born in Paris, 1844), better known as Anatole France, is the son of a bookseller, and, when still a very young man, began to lay the foundation of his abundant literary knowledge by browsing among the bookshops. In the '60's we find him associated as a poet with the *Parnassiens*. Thereafter he developed a prose style of marvelous finish and lucidity, and, both as critic and novelist, has established himself among the foremost modern writers of France. He was for a long time an idealist drawing upon the past for his themes; but, latterly, the life of to-day has engaged his subtle and ironic turn of mind, with the result that as a realist he is second to none. Anatole France is first of all a critic. As he says himself in the Preface to his articles collected under the title of *La Vie littéraire*, criticism is the

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latest of all literary forms, and will ultimately absorb them all. Hence his novels are, not only in the author's attitude but in their actual form, more akin to criticism than to fiction as we ordinarily understand it. This applies to one of his most notable novels, the artistic and admirable *La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque*, in which he has evoked the philosophical and libertine spirit of eighteenth-century Paris. Frankly subjective as a critic, he has in his novel *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*, sketched a portrait of himself. In *Thaïs* he has given his irony full play in a psychological study of the early Christians of Thebes. *Le Mannequin d'osier* is a piquantly satirical exposition of the France of to-day; *L'Orme du Mail*, a running fire of ironical and witty comment, belongs to the same category. *Crainquebille*, the simple but dramatic story of a wretched huckster of carrots and cabbages, was staged with great success at the Théâtre Antoine.

The polymorphous and gifted Jules Lemaître (born in 1853) is a bit of a poet, a playwright of some pretensions, a writer of agreeable tales, and, above all, an immensely clever critic of literature and the drama. His acute and lively *Les Contemporains* (containing his celebrated depreciation of Georges Ohnet) and the *Impressions de théâtre* are widely quoted, and somewhat variously estimated in respect to their value as permanent critical contributions. Among his collected tales—characterized by daintiness and delicacy—are *Serenus*, the history of a martyr; *Dix contes*; *Myrrha*; *Contes d'aujourd'hui*. He has written a rather remarkable novel, *Les Rois*. "This writer, Lemaître," says Gaston Deschamps, "is, I believe, with Anatole France, that one among our elders who knows best the resources and mischievous tricks of the French language."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE REALISTIC NOVEL

ROMANTICISM "having been consumed by its own flames," a reaction took place which soon led to realism, by which is understood the endeavor to portray life—people, manners, conversation—in its everyday aspects, and with a photographic accuracy of detail. The master of this new school was Balzac; its other chief representatives were Mérimée, Stendhal, Flaubert, the Goncourts, and Daudet.

Honoré de Balzac, born at Tours in 1799, was a brilliant and very fertile novelist. Vapereau tells us that at five years of age he read the Scriptures, and lost himself with delight in their mysterious depths. All books that fell into his hands he devoured in a wink. Often at dawn he set out, laden with books, with a piece of bread in his pocket, and went into the woods, where he read until nightfall. At the Collège de Vendôme, which he entered at an early age, he continued to give himself up to this passion; he made it a point to incur the punishment of solitary confinement in one of the college rooms, in order that he might pursue his reading free from distractions and interruption. Endowed with a prodigious memory, he retained everything: places, names, faces, the most unimportant things. Disquieting mental phenomena for a time arrested the overactivity of his youthful brain. In the chaos produced by a myriad of ideas, reason was suddenly threatened with eclipse; and it became necessary to suspend his studies temporarily. Nevertheless, at eighteen, he had already taken his degree of bachelor of letters, and was at the same time pursuing a course in the Law School of the Sorbonne and of the Collège de France. The father left his son to his own resources, because he had wished to make an attorney of him, and young Honoré refused absolutely to become one, al-

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though he was clerk in a notary's office for about three years. Entering without means into the life of Paris, the young man installed himself in a garret, and began to write with eagerness in the midst of his privations. He published several mediocre novels,¹ and attempted playwriting, but without success; his toil did not even procure him food. So he borrowed some money from a friend, and speedily lost it in a printing enterprise. Finally, after ten years, during which he did not let himself be discouraged, he achieved glory. The success of *Les Chouans*² showed him that he could depict only contemporary institutions and customs; and from that time on he devoted himself entirely to this field, choosing preferably exceptional lives, observing the least explored quarters of Paris and the provincial cities, and bringing from these a curious new world filled with moral infirmities, incomplete beings, degraded and abandoned types.

In his Breton novel, *Les Chouans*, he was under the influence of Scott and Cooper. But he came into his own with the publication of *La Peau de Chagrin*—that curious philosophic study which forms the first of the psychologic trilogy completed with *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita*, whose heroine, a disciple of the celebrated Swedish mystic, Swedenborg, tells what she has seen in heaven and hell.

Balzac had the habit of locking himself up in his room, and spending days and nights in unceasing labor, attired in a Dominican's gown. It was his peculiarity to write with the aid of a lamp, even in broad day. He retired early, rose to work at one o'clock in the night, and took strong coffee to keep himself awake and excite his imagination. In six years he published more than sixty volumes, of which several are masterpieces. His eccentric method of composition proved too expensive for his publishers to bear. He would make a rough sketch of a novel, and send it to the printer; and this process he would repeat a dozen, even twenty, times, until the book was finished.³

¹ Under the pseudonym of Lord Roone.

² *Les Chouans* first appeared under the name of *Le Dernier Chouan*.

³ This method employed by Balzac is frequently commented upon as extraordinary. But if we except his somewhat unusual number of revisions it does not essentially differ from the custom of certain of our

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The aim of Balzac, in all his novels, was to depict every possible phase of the life and manners of the French during the first half of the nineteenth century; and, in accord with an all-embracing plan, he gave his works the general title of *La Comédie Humaine*. The novels are classified in eight groups; the first part—*Études de Mœurs* (Studies of Manners)—embraces six series: first, *Scènes de la vie privée*, twenty-seven short stories of which the most famous is *La Femme de trente ans*. Second, *Scènes de la vie de province*, in which are found his most agreeable works. *Eugénie Grandet* is a delicious and original picture of provincial life. The heroine, Eugénie, has become the personification of filial devotion, and her father the type of the miser. In *Le Lys dans la Vallée* (The Lily of the Valley), one of the few productions of the author written with delicacy of feeling, Balzac has described his childhood. Third, *Scènes de la vie parisienne*. These include two of Balzac's most famous novels: *Le Père Goriot*, his masterpiece, an exposition of the too indulgent father who sacrifices himself for daughters unworthy of his kindness, and *César Birotteau* (*Histoire de la grandeur et de la décadence de César Birotteau, parfumeur*), in which Balzac exhibits the type of the good, but weak man, dazzled by fortune, and the victim of false friends. *Histoire des Treize* and *Les Parents pauvres* are of this series. Fourth, *Scènes de la vie de campagne*, including *Le Médecin de Campagne*, one of his principal novels, and *Les Paysans*. Fifth, *Scènes de la vie politique*. Sixth, *Scènes de la vie militaire*, to which *Les Chouans* belongs. The second part—*Série des études philosophiques*—embraces *La Recherche de l'absolu*, in which the alchemist, Balthazar Claës, sacrifices his honor and his family to his search for the philosopher's stone; together with the psychologic trilogy already mentioned. The third part contains the *Études analytiques des grandes et des petites misères du mariage*.

Balzac also wrote for the theater, but only two of his plays

contemporary authors, whose rough drafts of a novel are typewritten before elaboration. The typewriting machine had not been invented in Balzac's time, and so he had recourse to the printer. It was a question of the psychology of attention; and Balzac, who like his own Louis Lambert, could take in a printed page at a glance, doubtless understood very well the immense advantage of revising a manuscript in type.

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were successful: *La Marâtre* and *Mercadet le faiseur*. Apart from his novels, but not inferior in art to the very best of them, are the gross *Contes drôlatiques*—some thirty short tales teeming with vitality and Rabelaisian humor, in which Balzac brilliantly reproduced in mediæval French the sensual manner of the sixteenth century.

Balzac's faculty of poetic invention is greater than that of any other French writer; but seldom do we find in any one author so much that is admirable in close proximity with the mediocre. Of this genius capable of "producing monstrosities as well as masterpieces," Mr. Henry James remarks: "He is one of the finest artists and one of the coarsest. Viewed in one way, his novels are ponderous, shapeless, overloaded; his touch is graceless, violent, barbarous. Viewed in another, his tales have more color, more composition, more grasp of the reader's attention than any other's. Balzac's style would demand a chapter apart. It is the least simple style, probably, that ever was written; it bristles, it cracks, it swells and swaggers; but it is a perfect expression of the man's genius. Like his genius, it contains a certain quantity of everything, from immaculate gold to flagrant dross. He was a very bad writer, and yet unquestionably he was a very great writer."

Balzac was one of the founders of the *Société des gens de lettres* in France, of which he was called the "Grand Marshal." In twenty years he published ninety-seven works. M. Taine has thus described his method of composition: "He did not set out in the manner of artists, but in that of scholars; instead of painting, he dissected. He did not begin violently, at the first bound—as did Shakespeare and Saint-Simon—in respect to the soul of his characters; he turned them about, patiently, deliberately, like an anatomist—lifting a muscle, then a bone, then a vein, then a nerve, coming to the brain only after having covered the whole system of organs and functions. He described the city, then the street, and the house. . . . There was in him something of the archæologist, the architect, the upholsterer, the tailor. . . . These different factors of his powers of analysis came one after the other, each one reading his report—the most detailed and exact possible; the artist listened scrupulously, laboriously, and his imagina-

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tion was ignited only after he had accumulated as for a fire this elaborate scaffolding of paper scraps. . . . From this source arose several defects and several merits: in many places he fatigues many people. . . . What is worse, the book becomes obscure; a description is not a painting . . . the enumeration of all the stamens of a flower never puts in our minds the image of a flower. . . . But also what power! what prominence and what relief this interminable enumeration gives to the character! How real he becomes! His characters live; they have entered into familiar conversation: Nucingen, Rastignac, Philippe Bridau, Phellion, Bixiou, and a hundred others, are men whom we have seen, whom we mention to give the idea of a certain real person." Brunetière tells us: "As a writer Balzac¹ is not of the 'first rank,' nor is he even of those of whom it may be said that they receive from heaven at their birth the gift of 'style.' . . .

"In attempting to be witty,² he often fails to exhibit good taste; in like manner in attempting to display 'style,' he at times forgets the proper meanings of words and often the rules of grammar, and the very laws of the French syntax." To the reproach of immorality in Balzac's novels, Brunetière's apt defense is this: "Ought a representation of life be more moral than life itself? For what reasons, in the name of what principles? And if it were decided that it ought to be, what then would become of that exactness of reproduction without which there can be no representation of life?"

Balzac tells us that he created about two thousand characters; in this, his creative power, he has excelled even Dickens and Turgeneff. Some French critics are inclined to regard his portraits of women as his happiest characterizations, yet it must be confessed that his conception of woman's part in the terrestrial plan is not flattering, and his women sink into insignificance when compared with such masterly creations

¹ *Honoré de Balzac* by Ferdinand Brunetière, translated by Prof. R. L. Sanderson (French Men of Letters series).

² "In the rôle of a man of wit," says Brunetière, elsewhere, "Balzac is downright unbearable, and even Victor Hugo's humor is no heavier than Balzac's."

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as le Père Goriot, Vautrin, de Rastignac, le Père Grandet, Baron Hulot, etc. (except, however, such a woman as Madame Marneffe).

Money was the great aim of Balzac's life, and he was its slave. This consuming ambition appears in his correspondence, published in 1876, in two large volumes. The majority of these letters covering a period of thirty years, are addressed to his sister Madame de Surville; to an Alien, *Lettres à l'Étrangère* (Eveline Rzewuska, Countess Hanska, later his wife), and to others. To his sister's criticism on *Eugénie Grandet*, he wrote: "You tell me there are too many millions in *Eugénie Grandet*. But, foolish one, since the story is true, would you have me do better than truth?" Balzac was ceaselessly occupied with schemes to get rich quick. Having read in Tacitus that the Romans had formerly exploited silver mines in Sardinia, he borrowed a hundred thousand francs, and left Paris on a prospecting trip. During the sea voyage, he communicated his idea to the captain of the vessel, who found it excellent. On his return to Paris with specimens of ore containing a large amount of silver, he applied to the government for authority to exploit these mines, only to learn that the captain had anticipated him, and supplanted him entirely. Then he formed the project of cultivating pine-apples, estimating that it would yield him an income of two hundred thousand francs; but this tropical fruit does not ripen in France. He also planned to go to Corsica to cultivate opium. As further evidence of his failure in practical affairs, he insisted on being his own architect for a house he was building at Ville-d'Avray, but when it was completed there was no staircase.

Balzac finally achieved wealth, and was able to marry the Countess Hanska, whom he had loved for many years. The letters he wrote to her are among the best productions of his pen. It is generally supposed to have been a love match, for the countess made over her fortune to her children by her first husband, but Brunetière speaks skeptically of this "love" match. Balzac writes of the countess in a letter to his sister: "Napoleon said we pay for everything here below; nothing is stolen. It seems to me that I have paid very little. Twenty-five years of toil and struggle are nothing as

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the purchase money of an attachment so splendid, so radiant, so complete." Soon afterwards a disease of the heart suddenly cut short his career at the age of forty-nine.

Taine declared this master of the novel to be, after Shakespeare and Saint-Simon, the greatest storehouse of documents on human nature in existence. Sainte-Beuve writes: "However rapid and great the success of Balzac in France, it was perhaps still greater and more undisputed throughout Europe. The details that might be given in regard to this would seem fabulous.¹ . . .

Prosper Mérimée (1803-70)—novelist, historian, playwright and scholar—was a sober, precise writer, of a pure and vigorous style which is, however, sometimes hard and dry. At the time of the struggle between the champions of the classic and the romantic schools, he espoused Romanticism, and published his first work, the *Théâtre de Clara Gazul, comédienne espagnole*. Mérimée represented Clara Gazul as a real person—a Spanish actress, persecuted by the clergy of her country, and on the point of taking refuge in England. The air of reality with which he invested her in this collection of plays was heightened by the biographical account he supplied in the form of a preface. *Clara Gazul* was a great success, and everybody believed in the existence of the actress. Mérimée was even more successful in *La Guzla*—a collection of so-called Illyrian poems which he said he had gathered in Dalmatia, and attributed to an imaginary poet, Hyacinthe Maglonorvitch, whose history he duly set forth.

In his *Chronique du temps de Charles IX* (from which the opera of *Les Huguenots* is drawn) he pictured life and institutions during the religious wars. Among his novels and shorter stories are found: *La Jacquerie*, an historical novel describing the revolts of the French peasants against the nobles in the fourteenth century; *Matteo Falcone*, in which a Corsican peasant kills his son because he betrayed a fugitive concealed in his house; *La Vénus d'Ile*; *Le Vase étrusque*; *L'Enlèvement de la redoute*; *Carmen*, a pathetic and pic-

¹ The lives of his heroes and heroines were emulated, rooms were furnished à la Balzac, etc.

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turesque novel, upon which Meilhac and Halévy drew for the libretto of Bizet's opera.

Colomba—Mérimée's masterpiece—is a striking picture of Corsican life: a story of the revenge pursued by Colomba the heroine, with a bitter savagery not unmingled with a strange piety. Walter Pater says: "It showed intellectual depth of motive, firmly conceived structure, faultlessness of execution, vindicating the function of the novel as no tawdry light literature, but in very deed a fine art." Mérimée's stories leave a sad impression, but they are considered perfect models of narrative power.

Mérimée was the head of a Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and, owing to his knowledge of archæology, occupied the post of inspector of historical monuments. During his stay in Spain he was received by Madame de Montijo, mother of the future Empress Eugénie; and this friendship afterwards gained him admission to the intimate circle at the Tuileries. Much valuable information respecting the court life of Napoleon III is contained in Mérimée's *Lettres à une Inconnue*—a series of letters addressed to Mademoiselle Jenny Dacquin during a period of thirty years. His *Lettres à une autre Inconnue*, addressed to the Countess Przedrzerska, cover a period of three years.

Marie-Henri Beyle (1783–1842), who took the pseudonym of Stendhal from the birthplace of the German scientist Winckelmann, whom he greatly admired, was a writer of great power and originality, and exercised a marked influence on the later writers of the naturalistic school. Zola called him "the father of us all"; Balzac proclaimed his genius; Mérimée, incomparably his superior in style, was in a measure his pupil; Bourget's indebtedness is obvious. Yet he wrote abominably, and it was not till long after his death that literary criticism awoke to his importance. "I will not say he writes badly," says Faguet, "but that he does not write at all. He regards neither form nor method. He drafts, he never writes. Nevertheless, he is a great novelist." Stendhal himself has remarked, with more truth and less pose than his autobiographical notes commonly reveal, that he set about writing as he would smoke a cigar. His indifference to literary style—singular failing for a Frenchman—

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blinded Victor Hugo to his merits. "Is he still alive?" asked the author of *Les Misérables*. "No? That is unfortunate, because I should have requested you to tell him that I shall wait to read his works until he writes French." Hugo was not the only one who waited, in another sense. Stendhal himself prophesied in a letter to Balzac in 1840 that his books would not be read till about 1880, and the prophecy came to pass.

Stendhal, whose idol was Napoleon, served in the commissary department of the army during the Napoleonic campaigns; he was present at the battle of Jena, and wrote, as an eyewitness, a description of the burning of Moscow. His life, indeed, was by no means eventless; he knew war, and he suffered the emotions of love in a series of amatory experiences which seem to have yielded him more literary "copy" than contentment. He appears to have craved excitement with an expectation that outran reality. M. Rod tells us that he displayed great coolness and courage during his first battle beneath the fort of Bard, and that when the fight was done he asked himself in all sincerity, "Is this all?" Subtle and artificial, Stendhal was essentially a psychologist, but his analytical penetration overlooked everything which did not pertain to the intellect or to passion. He loved mystery, so that real facts concerning his character have only gradually come out; both the man and his works afford too many complexities for brief exposition. Stendhal traveled extensively, and was well acquainted with English literature. He lived much of the time in Paris, but his heart was in Italy, where he served as consul in Civita Vecchia. It was characteristic of him that he wrote his own epitaph, describing himself as a Milanese, and caused it to be engraved on his tombstone: "Qui giace Arrigo Beyle, Milanese. Scrisse, Amò, Visse." ("Here lies Henri Beyle, Milanese. He wrote, loved, lived.")

Of Stendhal's novels, *La Chartreuse de Parme* (immortalized by its description of the battle of Waterloo) and *Le Rouge et le Noir* are generally regarded as his most important fiction, and as having paved the way for the French psychologists of our own time. The *Chartreuse de Parme*, which, in Balzac's opinion, might have been written by Machiavelli had

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he lived in exile in the nineteenth century, describes the intrigues of Italian court life. Its exaggerated and sensational plot suggests the novel of adventure; its merit lies in Stendhal's extraordinary power of analysis. *Le Rouge et le Noir* indicates in its title the red trappings of the soldier, the black frock of the priest. Stendhal as a youth was educated by priests, whom he disliked and who misunderstood him, and in this tale he has ironically exhibited the clergy, after the fall of Napoleon, as paramount to the army. In the principal character, Julien Sorel, the author has drawn a remarkable portrait of an ambitious and egotistical man, of which Ferdinand Brunetière writes: "I should not like to decide which is more to be marveled at, the incoherence of this character or the conceit of the author. . . . I will also take note, if you like, of Stendhal's influence, but I will also remark that his influence was not very deep, and that it finally ended only in an immoderate glorification of the author of *La Chartreuse de Parme*—that masterpiece of pretentious tedium—rather than in any modification of the novel."

Stendhal's best work, perhaps, is his minutely analytical study, *De l'Amour*, which fell flat at the time of publication, but has come to be recognized as unsurpassed of its kind. In his critical and biographical works on music and painting he was an unblushing plagiarist. His "lives" of Haydn and Mozart, published under the pen name of Bombet, were coolly appropriated from Carpani; in writing his *De la peinture en Italie* he borrowed freely, and without credit from Lanzi. But all that he did in this kind was interwoven with his personality and his art as a *raconteur*. He was an admirable tourist, and his books of travel—including the *Promenades dans Rome* and the *Mémoires d'un Touriste*—are methodless, but highly agreeable records of an accomplished *dilettante*. Stendhal's writings are not popular, but at the present time he has become a cult with an increasing circle of admirers. Prof. Benjamin W. Wells and Mr. James Huneker, in this country, have gone far in supplying critical estimates of his works and analyses of his character; while in France his performance and his personality have variously engaged the pens of Taine, Zola, Sainte-Beuve, Balzac, Bourget, and Édouard Rod.

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If the deranged nervous system of Gustave Flaubert (1821-80) had not belied a body that bespoke the robust giant, he might have been the king of the Romanticists; for romantic he was by inclination and equipment. Instead, he wrote *Madame Bovary*—a dreary, sordid tragedy of provincial life in Normandy. This story, which the critic, J. J. Weiss, classed among the “brutal literature,” and upon which Flaubert had spent six years, first appeared (1857) in the *Revue de Paris*, and made such a scandal that author and publisher were haled into court on a charge of immorality. They were, however, acquitted; people were not long in perceiving that Flaubert had an ethical, not a prurient, purpose, in his exhibits of unpleasant subjects and characters, and that an author of genius, with a marvelous style, had pointed the way to a new literary method. Flaubert, however, though he has been acclaimed the high priest of realism, does not really belong to the school of disciples who afterwards hailed him as master. His undying hatred of the bourgeoisie, his revolt against the mediocrity of modern environment, his overpowering sense of futility, led him far from the idols of his youth—Hugo and Châteaubriand. His analytic mind warred with his imagination. The malady (epilepsy) that corroded his soul, that made his presentment of life, as he himself has confessed, “a smell escaping from the vent of a nauseating kitchen,” influenced his intellect in the selection of material from humanity’s great storehouse. But the poetic sentiment that linked him with the Romanticists was not extinguished; and so he was a realist and a romanticist by turns. In one of his romantic reactions he took refuge in antiquity, and wrote *Salammô*. For this he visited Tunis, dwelt among the ruins of Carthage, ransacked a thousand books, and then for six years toiled interminably—building, polishing, recasting his sentences, till the ancient city and its picturesque civilization were recreated in the glowing pages of his fiction. *Salammô*, sister of Hannibal, is the central figure; the period is that immediately following the first Punic war; the story relates to the uprising of the mercenaries against Rome.

In his *L’Éducation sentimentale* (1869), Flaubert again made provincial life the subject of his satirical scorn; but this

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time his literary skill did not redeem the depressing qualities of his work. "To think," remarks Mr. Henry James, "of the talent, the knowledge, the experience, the observation that he buried, without hope of resurrection, in these pages, is to pass a comfortless half hour."

Flaubert's great fantastic tale, *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*, was begun in 1848, and finished in 1874. Its melancholy view of humanity throughout the ages, conveyed in pictures of extraordinary power, is a document of all-embracing pessimism. The same theme, with a contemporary application, is worked out in the uncompleted *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which appeared in 1881. *Trois contes* (1877) contains the three novelettes, *Un cœur simple*, *La légende de Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier*, and *Hérodiade*—condensed examples of Flaubert's manner in which some critics find the most satisfactory expression of his powers.

Flaubert has been called the "writer of writers." His works exercise a potent fascination for all persons susceptible to the charm of literary style. His passion for the right word—the one and only word that will express the author's thought—became for him a kind of religion. He spent hours on a single phrase until he had made it perfect in expression and harmony, and after he had written it he would read it aloud. After visiting him on a certain occasion, Taine wrote: "He declaimed and shouted so this night that his mother could not sleep."

Flaubert had no love affairs—unless his epistolary relations with the poetess Mademoiselle Louise Colet, may be considered as such—and he remained a bachelor. Aside from six years spent in Paris, he passed his life at Croisset, near Rouen, his birthplace. He had private means, and was thus enabled to produce slowly; but the last ten years of his life, in addition to misfortunes of friendship and the serious impairment of his health, were passed in comparative poverty.

Those curious literary twins, the brothers Goncourt (Edmond, 1822-96; Jules, 1830-70), afford a singular example of collaboration: each took the same subject, and elaborated it on the same plan, and then together they fused their separate productions into one work issued under both their names. The literary method which they introduced, and applied to

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the writing of history, as well as fiction, was microscopic in observation, and infinitely laborious and tortured in the record. They set themselves to interpreting modern life with the most minute fidelity, and neither the clinic nor the gutter escaped the zeal of their research. It was their theory that no thing or person which they could not themselves examine was material proper to fiction; the characters which they transferred to the pages of a novel were real persons whose speech, manners, and conduct they had studied at close range. In the pursuit of the veritable, Edmond even made innumerable notes with the aid of an opera glass. Among the novels which they jointly produced were *Sœur Philomène* (1861), descriptive of the hospital life of a Sister of Charity; *Renée Mauperin* (1864), a study of social life; *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865), a characteristic exposition of the morals of a domestic servant who had been employed in the Goncourt household; *Manette Salomon* (1867), in which is traced the degeneration of an artist who married a model; *Madame Gervaisais* (1869), a study in mysticism, in the preparation of which Edmond devoured numerous works of religious devotion. These stories are made up of sketches or impressions of particular episodes or incidents in the lives of the characters, and contain bits of vivid delineation after the manner of naturalism. As for the style, it is *l'écriture artiste*, abounding in coined words, and in devious turns and twists of expression—in short, it is a new kind of French. A critic of that nation has called their novels *romans particularistes*, and has described their mode of expression as “labored, inverted, unexpected, disconcerting, always affected and seeming to strive to the utmost to find all possible ways how not to be natural.” The dramas produced jointly are *Henriette Maréchal* and *La Patrie en danger*, protestations against romanticism.

The Goncourts made a specialty of the eighteenth century, and their art criticisms and historical studies are of considerable value. Their passion for patient research and for documentary evidence is given a brilliant setting in *Histoire de la Société française pendant la Révolution et sous le Directoire*; *La Révolution dans les mœurs*; *Portraits intimes du XVIIIème Siècle*; *Les Maîtresses de Louis XV*; *La femme au XVIIIème Siècle*; *L'Art au XVIIIème Siècle*, which con-

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tains thirteen sketches of the principal painters and engravers of the eighteenth century. The life of the great painter Watteau, heretofore almost unknown, the incomparable Greuze, Boucher, and Fragonard—"le petit poète de l'art d'aimer du temps, le Chérubim de la peinture érotique"—are among those who have found marvelous interpreters in these brilliant chroniclers, the de Goncourts.

After Edmond had watched the lingering death of his brother Jules, noted each symptom of mental decay, and diagnosed the disease as "literature," he continued his labors alone. Between 1878 and 1884 he produced the novels, *La Fille Élisa*, *Les Frères Zemganno*, *La Faustin*, *Chérie*; and he lived to see a fungous growth of the naturalistic fiction he had helped to nourish. From 1887 until his death he was occupied with the nine volumes of *Le Journal des Goncourt*, which is packed with information—more or less indiscreet—concerning the lives of himself and his literary contemporaries. Among those who frequented his reunions were Daudet, Zola, Paul Margueritte, Rosny, and Loti. In order that these associations should not be broken up he bequeathed his property—including the house at Auteuil and his valuable collections of bric-à-brac and Japanese art—to ten of his friends, composing the Académie Goncourt.¹ By the terms of his will each of the ten was to receive a life annuity of six thousand francs, to be forfeited, however, if he entered the French Academy.

Alphonse Daudet (1840-97), one of the most engaging figures in modern French literature, combined the imagination and fancy of an idyllic poet with the faculty of observing and recording modern life in some of its sinister aspects. The exuberance of the Provençal was tempered and restrained by his Parisian environment and associations; his impressionable temperament and his keen perception of human suffering were held in check by a sense of humor that, in the main, saved him from errors of intolerance and disproportion. Zola's description of his appearance in early

¹ Daudet and Hennique were named as presidents. The other eight members were the two Rosny brothers, Paul Margueritte, J. K. Huysmans, Gustave Geoffroy, Lucien Descaves, Élémer Bourges, Octave Mirbeau.

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youth well accords with the mental pictures produced by a perusal of his writings: "He had the delicate, high-strung beauty of an Arabian horse. His hair was flowing, his silky beard divided. He had large eyes, a narrow nose, an amorous mouth—a countenance illuminated with a tender light that lent it individuality, and a smile that expressed intellect and the joy of living. There was something in him of the French urchin and something of the Oriental woman."

Daudet, who was born in Nîmes, in Southern France, was thrown on his own resources, through the failure of his father, a silk manufacturer. Leaving school at Lyons when he was sixteen, he undertook to make his living as an usher at a small college in Alais; but such was the drudgery of the task, and so mean were the conditions imposed upon him, that after a year of misery he fled to Paris, where his elder brother, a journalist, had already preceded him. He reached Paris half starved, and with but two francs in his pocket; but he was not destined to great privations. His brother succored him; de Villemessant, the editor of *Le Figaro*, recognized his talent at once, and made a place for him; and at the age of twenty he became one of the secretaries of his powerful patron, the Duc de Morny, whom he afterwards lampooned in *Le Nabab* (1878). At first he wrote poems, collected in book form, in 1858, with the title *Amoureuses*. This brought him some celebrity, but he did not long pursue the vocation of poet. In these first years he essayed the drama, to which he returned from time to time—always with indifferent success; earned his bread in journalism; and produced some fairy tales, including *Le Roman du Chaperon rouge*. Then in 1868-69—having secluded himself for a time in a ruined windmill in the country in Provence—there appeared two works that made him famous. The first of these, *Le Petit Chose*, was a pathetic leaf from his own life; the second, *Lettres de Mon Moulin* (Letters from my Windmill), a collection of tales and sketches—idyllic, realistic, humorous, analytic—that marked him a master of the *conte*. Daudet thereafter wrote many short stories—a vehicle in which his varied powers are seen in miniature, and in which he has not been surpassed by any of his contemporaries. With the publication of *Jack* (1873)—a poignant story of an illegit-

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imate child, that profoundly affected George Sand—he realized that his *métier* was the novel. A year later, *Fromont jeune et Risler aîné* was a popular success, and revealed him as a realistic novelist of penetration and power. *Les Rois en Exil* (1879), the least popular of his works, is a satiric fling at certain bankrupt kings who had sought the consolations of life in Paris. *Numa Roumestan* (1882) is a wonderful study (in which Gambetta sat for the portrait) of the lights and shades of Provençal character. In some respects it is Daudet at his best. In *L'Évangéliste* (1883) inspired, it is said, by the visit to Paris, of the Salvation Army, he pictured, in pessimistic strokes, the effect on a simple mind of misdirected religious enthusiasm. *Sapho* (1884), dedicated “to my sons when they are twenty,” is a deterrent portrait, delicately executed, of the French courtesan. Though *L'Immortel* (1889), a bitter, personal satire on the French Academy and its members, enjoyed a large sale, it is the least happy of Daudet's productions. It represents indeed, in an extreme degree, his most serious sin against art—his tendency in his novels to exhibit, under a too transparent disguise, the weaknesses of well-known persons in real life. It has also been held against Daudet that he imitated Dickens and Thackeray rather too closely. Like Dickens, he possessed the power of mingling tears with laughter. It may further be remarked that the sentimentalism of Dickens's pathos is not that author's strongest point; and that those who love to dwell on these things may find some instruction in comparing the death of Little Nell with Daudet's *La Mort du Dauphin* in the *Lettres de mon Moulin*.

In *Tartarin de Tarascon* (1872) and its sequels—*Tartarin sur les Alpes* (1886) and *Port-Tarascon* (1890)—Daudet employed his skill in satire and characterization, not in sounding the depths of human weakness and suffering, but in holding up to joyous ridicule the peculiar foibles of the Southern Frenchman. As a piece of sustained humor, faithful to a local type, yet ingrained with elements of world-wide truth, there is nothing in modern French literature comparable to *Tartarin*.

Daudet's literary style is vivacious, expressive, and appealing. “Il touche, il plaît, il charme, il possède ce don d'at-

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tendrir qui est d'un si grand prix," says Anatole France. He wrote at a time when the public demanded realism, but he did not adhere very closely to the tenets of Zola and his school, with whom he was connected more by association than by sympathy. As Augustin Filon has remarked: "He borrowed from it all that was good and sound; he accepted realism as a practical method, not as an ultimate result and a consummation. Again, he was prevented from the danger of going down too deep and too low into the unclean mysteries of modern humanity, not so much perhaps by moral delicacy as by an artistic distaste for all that is repulsive and unseemly."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE NATURALISTIC NOVEL

ÉMILE ZOLA

“NATURALISM,” says a distinguished critic, “is still realism, but realism advertising scientific pretensions; or rather, it is an attempt to assimilate the proceedings of literature and the proceedings of science. It is, therefore, experimental. In short, the naturalistic novelists have been attentive observers of modern life, but have unfortunately paid attention only to its obscenities.”

The chief representative of this school is Émile Zola (1840–1902), whose so-called scientific method—a libel on the exact proceedings of true science—was especially directed to expounding human motives and conduct with reference to heredity. It is pretty generally agreed that he was the victim of his own theories—which he defined in his *Roman expérimental* and in his *Romanciers naturalistes*—and that in failing to demonstrate them in his own writings he also failed to obtain the lasting recognition which he might otherwise have achieved through a happier employment of his powers. These consist of a prodigious talent for description—particularly in descriptions of the crowd in action, of mobs and men in battle; of a gloomy imagination that impelled him to write as a kind of epic poet masquerading as a scientific observer; of a vigor in composition, a fecund creative ability. His sternest critics admit the effectiveness of his imagery; those whose stomachs revolt at his grossness, his vulgarity, his deliberate delight in the nauseous, his lugging in of depravity by the heels—point, nevertheless, if somewhat ironically, to a novelette, *L'Attaque du Moulin*, as a little classic among battle pieces. Zola was either congenitally incapable of seeing the true proportions by which a balance is struck

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between the ugly and the base and the beautiful and noble in life, or in his obsession by a theory he willfully blinded himself to the virtues and aspirations of humanity. He did not even possess the saving grace of that immature conception of character which sees people both as wholly good and wholly bad—but saw them, for the most part, as simply vicious. His style is lacking in lightness of touch, and unrelieved by the play of humor and fancy; ponderous in manner, his matter when concerned with minute details is often tedious.

Zola was born in Paris, but spent his school days in Aix, where his father, a Venetian engineer with a Greek strain, was engaged in building a canal. On returning to Paris he suffered great privations, spending at times an entire week in bed because his clothing was in pawn. Finally, he obtained employment as a clerk in the publishing house of Hachette, and devoted his leisure hours to writing—his criticisms on art and literature, contributed to the press, attracting some attention. After the appearance of *Mes Haines*, *Mon Salon*, and *Édouard Manet* (an appreciation of the impressionistic painter), he produced a volume of short stories, *Contes à Ninon* (1864) that are not inferior in literary value to his later and more celebrated work, together with several novels, of which *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) will bear comparison with some of his most vivid creations.

From 1871 until 1893 Zola occupied himself in writing the series of twenty novels on which his reputation chiefly rests—novels comprising a separate story in each volume, but linked by the same purpose, and introducing members of the same family under the general title, *Les Rougon-Macquart, histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le second Empire*. The Rougon-Macquart novels, in the order of their appearance, are: *La Fortune des Rougon*, *La Curée*, *Le Ventre de Paris*, *La Conquête de Plassans*, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon*, *L'Assommoir*, *Une Page d'Amour*, *Nana*, *Pot-Bouille*, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, *La Joie de Vivre*, *Germinal*, *L'Œuvre*, *La Terre*, *Le Rêve*, *La Bête Humaine*, *L'Argent*, *La Débâcle*, *Le Docteur Pascal*. This plan—pursued partly by the methods of naturalistic observation, and also in a great measure by devouring books on the subject in hand—was to demonstrate scientifically and

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with reference to hereditary laws how a certain number of people of the same origin would conduct themselves in different environments. With two exceptions, these novels are repulsive and distorted pictures of life, often deformed, even in their most brilliant passages, by coarseness and bad taste. The gross and repulsive realism of *La Terre*, in which the French peasants are pictured as beasts, disgusted even some of the author's adherents. These peasants depicted in their bloody debauches, their ribaldry, their brutality, and with an absolute lack of moral sense—that which in man is superior to his nature—are unnatural distortions. Zola appears to much better advantage in *La Débâcle*, in which the fall of the Napoleonic dynasty and the Franco-Prussian War are described with great intensity and power. *Le Rêve* and *Une Page d'Amour*, in which Zola restrained his tendency to nastiness, scarcely warrant the assumption that he might have attained great celebrity by eschewing the gross and sensational. It is impossible here to treat in detail the defects of his method. But take the one instance of *La Bête Humaine*. John Addington Symonds, who discovered in Zola “an idealist of the purest water”—that is to say, one who treated reality from an ideal point of view, has remarked that this novel of murder confounded with sexual desire “has all those qualities of the constructive reason by which an ideal is distinguished from the bare reality. Not only does it violate our sense of probability in life that ten persons should be either murderers or murdered, or both together, when all of them exist in close relations through their common connections with one line of railway, but the short space of time required for the evolution of this intricate drama of blood and appetite is also unnatural.”

Zola's trilogy of the cities—*Lourdes*, *Rome*, *Paris*—has not enhanced his reputation, while *Fécondité*, *Travail*, *Vérité*—the three novels of the uncompleted *Quatre Évangiles* (Four Gospels)—betray the decline of his imagination and descriptive powers. In 1898, four years before his death, he startled France by his daring and eloquent espousal of the cause of Dreyfus—his famous letter in the *Aurore*, beginning “J'accuse” . . . leading to an investigation and exposure of the conspiracy against the long-suffering army officer.

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Zola's novels have enjoyed a tremendous vogue, which may in part be accounted for by their very deficiencies and by the persistent and flamboyant advertising which attended their production in France, where the unspeakable *Nana*,¹ *La Débâcle* and *La Terre* were the most popular of all his works; but *L'Assommoir* and *Germinal* are considered his two masterpieces. Zola was a tireless worker, and though his actual daily output is said to have been but five hundred words, he had no idle days, but lived up to the motto inscribed over the hearth in his study at Médan: "Nulla dies sine linea." He repeatedly sought admission to the Academy, but in vain. After his death France decreed the removal of his remains from the Père-Lachaise to the Panthéon, as a recognition of his service in the cause of justice rather than of his literary merits.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Both in his person and in his work Guy de Maupassant (1850-93) presents a paradox. Outwardly a ruddy athlete, a powerful oarsman and swimmer, he was in reality a neurasthenic; in his literary labors he found no joy, but only, as he has himself confessed, a refuge from the emptiness of life. We are told that he had no powers of invention, no theories of art, that he was neither a thinker nor a reader—even that he had no ideas. "He was born," says Faguet, "to see and to paint that which he saw—and only that. But he saw it with a fullness and a miraculous intensity of vision, and he described it with a breadth and at the same time with a precision which enraptured and stupefied." Maupassant, in fact, as one critic has expressed it, was great because of his very limitations: his fancy did not war with his habit of acute observation; he made no excursions beyond his chosen province of the actual; he did not concern himself with morals; his outlook was objective always. After serving a literary apprenticeship of seven years (1873-80) to Flaubert, who was his godfather and an old friend of his mother, he put forth a volume of poems (*Des Vers*) of marked originality. In the

¹ One hundred and sixteen editions show its popularity.

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same year he astonished the literary world with his story, *Boule de Suif*, contributed to the *Soirées de Médan*—a collection of short tales by Zola, J. K. Huysmans and others. This, together with the two novels, *Une Vie* (1883)—a very painful but convincing picture of an average woman's tragic life—and *Pierre et Jean* (1888), are among the most remarkable of his productions. Maupassant's fame rests principally on his short tales, of which he composed over two hundred. Very many of these are models of concision and style. Some of the best of them are stories of the peasants of Normandy, where he was born and reared; others are far afield, covering a wide range of human emotion and experience. In these, as in his novels, appears the pessimism that dominated his attitude toward life, coupled with a licentiousness in choice of subject that is redeemed only by an exquisite irony and art. Some of his studies in the emotion of fear express the vague dread that haunted him all his life. He especially feared old age. He feared also that he might cease to enjoy the sensuous things in life. The morbid and haunting fancies of *La Horla* (1887) disclosed him in the clutch of the mental malady that finally overpowered him; aggravated by drugs and other excesses, his disease took the form of violent insanity, and he perished very miserably. Among the titles of his sixteen volumes of short stories are: *La Maison Tellier*; *Mademoiselle Fifi*; *M. Parent*; *Yvette*; *La Petite Rogue*. His play, *Musotte* (1891), written in collaboration with J. Normand, met with a considerable success.

J. K. HUYSMANS, MARCEL PRÉVOST

Among the talented young men who rallied around Zola in his soirées of Médan¹ was a pupil who surpassed the preceptor in living up to the tenets of naturalism. To Joris Karl Huysmans (1848–1907)—born in Paris, but of Flemish origin—belongs the distinction of producing some of the foulest works of fiction with which the French nation has ever been afflicted. His earlier novels—*Marthe*, *Les Sœurs*

¹ Zola's home near Paris.

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Vatard, *En ménage*—are of the slime, slimy, and may be dismissed as such. After the publication of Zola's *La Terre* Huysmans developed a taste for the occultism run mad that became at this time a fad of the Parisians, and in his novel, *Là-Bas* presented a repulsive study of Satanism, in which the writer, Durtal, is so disgusted with the world that he turns to the devil for consolation. It is a phenomenon of such temperaments that after a time the pendulum swings the other way. Huysmans, self-nauseated, found relief in mysticism. He entered a Trappist monastery, and recorded his moral experience, with no little beauty and sincerity, in the pages of *En Route* (1895). In the drift of the novel of to-day Huysmans declared that he saw only "anarchy and confusion." As a matter of fact, a more wholesome and rational conception of life and letters had begun to make itself felt in the reaction that always takes place when men grow weary of wading in the mire.

Marcel Prévost (born 1862), whose Zolaesque tendencies became diverted under the influence of Bourget, has wavered between an ethical purpose and the inclination to rest content with his searching and popular exposition of the feminine heart. He is an accomplished writer of love stories, told with great delicacy and ease of style. *Chonchette* (1888) established his success, and his *Lettres de femmes* (1892) earned him a reputation as one of the wittiest men of his period. *Demi-vierges* (1894) enjoyed a brief trans-Atlantic vogue. His later novels, *Frédérique* and *Léa*, rank with the best of contemporary fiction, and disclose an advance in nobility of sentiment and ideas.

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

BOURGET, ROD, MARGUERITTE

The narrow views of the naturalists, their exaggerated concern for externals and their coarseness of touch brought about an inevitable reaction that expressed itself through fiction in analysis of the mind and of sentiment, and, above all, in the study of moral problems. This movement began about 1885, when M. Brunetière, in an article on the English novelist, George Eliot, introduced to the French a realism as exact as theirs, but informed with human sympathy and a more refined method of ethical inquiry. At the same time the materialism and determinism of Taine, whose philosophy had been reflected in a somewhat distorted fashion by Zola and his disciples, gave way to the cultured skepticism and dilettanteism of Renan, among whose pupils are Lemaitre and Anatole France. The Russian novelists, too, were a factor in shaping the tendencies of French fiction, which has not in recent years looked to any one leader for its ideas and formulas, but has followed various currents—psychological, mystical, symbolical, decadent, and has lost perhaps in robustness and conviction what it has gained in idealism.

In the preface to his novel, *Trois cœurs*, Édouard Rod calls the psychological method "Intuitivism." Its foremost exponent—the leader of the reaction against the naturalists of fiction—is Paul Bourget (born 1852), who derives both from Renan and Taine. Bourget has the broad equipment supplied by travel, study, and recreation, and his gift of subtle and acute analysis has contributed to make his essays of more importance than his novels. His *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* (1883), the *Nouveaux Essais* (1885) and the *Pastels d'Hommes et de Femmes* (1890-91), are psychological presentments of literary men and of lay types, both masculine and feminine, in which the author has been described as writing the history of his own soul as well as some chapters of the moral history of his times. In some of his earlier novels—as in *Cruelle Énigme* (1885), he betrays his fatalism, but in *Le Disciple* (1889) and *La Terre Promise*

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(1892) he indicates that such doctrines may lead one into crime. Still later—in *Le Fantôme*, *Drames de Famille* and *L'Étape*—he strikes a more human note that is none the less psychological in its analysis. In his last novel *L'Émigré*, Bourget advocates a return to the church and the throne as a panacea for France's social troubles. His especial field in fiction is the fashionable world, and he has found a large audience among women. Bourget was admitted to the Academy in 1894.

Édouard Rod (born 1857) was at first a follower of Zola, but later employed his talent for delicate analysis in the treatment of moral ideas and questions of conscience. *La Vie privée de Michel Teissier*, together with its sequel, *La seconde Vie de Michel Teissier*, represent his earlier manner. Of his later work, *L'Inutile Effort* (1903) is one of the most touching novels of the day.

Paul Margueritte (born 1860) explored for a time the depths of naturalism; but in 1887 he abjured the teachings of that school, and in *La Force des Choses* (1891) produced a strong and wholesome work. *Ma Grande* (1893) is a story of simple pathos, relieved by effective humor. In 1898, in *Le Désastre*, he turned his hand to an historical study of the Franco-Prussian War, followed by a sequel, *Les Tronçons du Glaive* (1900), written in collaboration with his brother Victor.

BARRÈS, ROSNY, FABRE, CLARETIE

Maurice Barrès (born 1862) in *Sous l'Œil des Barbares* (1888), *Un Homme Libre* (1889), and *Le Jardin de Bérénice* (1890), began by writing beautifully—if somewhat vaguely and unintelligibly—about himself. In these novels of “le culte du moi”¹ he undertook to adapt to the French understanding the subversive ideas of the philosopher Nietzsche. *Les Déracinés* (1898)—a protest against individualism—exhibits the development of another and a more practical attitude—“le culte du pays natal” (the cult of the fatherland). This novel, together with *L'Appel au Soldat*, belongs to the series called *L'Énergie Nationale*. M. Barrès is conspicuous among the literary companions who stand for “na-

¹ The cult of self.

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tional energy." He is one of the political "old guard" of Nationalists, and we see him in the French Chamber of Deputies (March, 1908) vigorously, but hopelessly, opposing the appropriation of funds to pay for the removal of Zola's bones to the Panthéon.

J. H. Rosny (1856-) (a name that stands for the combined work of two brothers) is another deserter from the doctrines of Zola, and a writer of uneven merit who has made a cult of science and ethics.

To go back a little, we have in Ferdinand Fabre (1827-98) the incomparable painter of priests and peasants of the Cévennes. Among his best works are *Mon Oncle Célestin*, *Le Chevrier*, and *L'Abbé Tigrane*.

Passing mention suffices for the work of Jules Renard, lately made a member of the Académie Goncourt; of the realistic Willy (pseudonym of Henry Gauthier-Villars), whose novel, *Claudine à l'école*, was a great popular success; of Léon Daudet (son of Alphonse Daudet), who developed a vein of naturalistic satire in *Les Morticoles*; of the versatile and proficient Jules Claretie, critic, historian, playwright, chronicler, and especially a novelist of fecundity and no little merit, whose twenty-five works of fiction include *Monsieur le Ministre*, *L'Assassin*, and *Les Ornières de la Vie*.

With every new tendency in literature there arises in France a "school." The latest manifestation of this striving for novel methods is the *École Naturiste*, founded in 1900 by George de Bouhéliér, who regards the events and expressions of life and nature as so many revelations of the will of God. Bouhéliér, who has many ardent disciples, is the author of *La Tragédie du Nouveau Christ*, in which Christ is depicted as a modern man in relation to modern circumstances. *Lucie, fille perdue et criminelle* is regarded as his best novel.

THE NOVEL OF THE PROVINCES

French writers, with some few exceptions, have confined themselves to Paris and its immediate environment. Their occasional exploration of the provinces has been chiefly for purposes of caricature and ridicule. But of recent years their eyes have been opened to a wealth of neglected beauty in town

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and country. Paul Adam, in his new book, *La Morale de Paris*, notes that, without official sanction, no one had formerly dared to approve a sonnet of Picardy, a play of Toulouse, an opera of Marseilles, a Vendean narrative, or a novel of Beauce. Now, Fabre has sounded the praises of the Cévennes. Loti celebrates the loveliness of Brittany. Theuriet has taken Lorraine for his theme; so also has Émile Moselly (pseudonym of Émile Chénin), the "Poet of the Moselle," whose novel, *Terres Lorraines*, was recently awarded the Goncourt prize. In *Le Deuil du Clocher*, Joseph Ageorges has described the ancient province of Berry; *Fils de la Terre* is a Bearnaise novel by Capdeville; Pierre Vernon pictures the customs of Brittany in *Aux Creux des Sillons*. In the peasantry and scenery of Anjou, René Bazin (recently elected to the Académie) has found a congenial field for the exercise of an uncommon talent. The elegance of his style and the elevation of his ideas are displayed in *La Terre qui meurt*, *Les Oberlé*, and *Le Blé qui lève*. His latest novel, *L'Isolée*, which has passed its fifty-eighth edition in France, is the story of five nuns thrown upon the world through the closing of their school by the French law. Finally—in *La Chèvre d'or*, *Jean des Figues*, and *Au Bon Soleil*—that charming conteur, Paul Arène, has given us stories "perfect in form, and as clear and pure as a Provençal day."

Of the five thousand women writers of France, the most widely known is Gyp,¹ the "gamin" of the Faubourg St. Germain, who has already published about ninety volumes of satiric fiction. The "explosion of feminine sincerity," as a French critic expresses it, and which Nietzsche prophesied, has taken place, and Madame Rachilde led the way. It is the expression of woman's views of life, morality, and passion from her own standpoint and not as heretofore, from man's; thus Stendhal's ungallant criticism of women writers no longer holds good: "Ce qui fait que les femmes, quand elles se font auteurs, atteignent rarement au sublime, c'est que jamais elles n'osent être franches qu'à demi: être franches serait pour elles comme sortir sans fichu."

¹ Pen name for Countess Gabrielle de Martel de Janville, a descendant of Mirabeau.

CHAPTER XXX

RECENT POETRY ¹

LYRIC poetry, revived by the Romanticists, has been influenced by the various tendencies in literature. At first it was personal, subjective, as true lyric poetry should be; then, toward the middle of the century, it became "scientific," impersonal. In this transformation Leconte de Lisle (1820-1894) was an important factor. In theory he sought to be impassive to his own sentiments and emotions as well as to those of others. He aimed at precision, and his style became exaggerated, though his verses, like Gautier's, showed great perfection of form. This studied, methodic impeccability, reduced to a system in the pursuit of art for art's sake, exercised its sway over a group of young poets variously known as the "Parnassiens" and as "les impassibles." They took the name of Parnassiens from the name of their collection of poems, published by the editor under the title, *Parnasse Contemporain*. The thirty-four poets of this school—if such it can be called—acknowledged as their masters, Baudelaire, de Banville, Gautier, and Leconte de Lisle. They sacrificed everything to form—striving after a plastic, pictorial beauty that often charms the ear, but is lacking in passion and ideas, and does not reach the heart. Furthermore, though they rallied around Leconte de Lisle, not one of them resembled him, nor did any two of them resemble each other. The most distinguished and best known of the group were: Sully-Prudhomme (1839-1907), a poet of great distinction and delicacy of sentiments, who made poetry a medium for philosophy

¹ A "Salon of Poetry" was inaugurated in 1907 to be held in the Palais des Beaux-Arts, and to have an annual spring gathering, just as the Salon of Fine Arts. At the head of this movement are: François Coppée, Catulle Mendès (both dead since), and Edmond Rostand.

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in sonnet and epic; Paul Verlaine (1844-96), a mixture of the sensualist and mystic, in life as in his art, who rebelled against the hard and fast rules of French versification, often striking in his musical effects the true lyric note—an echo of Villon, a near cousin of Beaudelaire—melodious, repellant, exquisite, alarming; the Cuban, José-Maria de Herédia (born 1842), an artificer of finely wrought sonnets, whose *Trophées* are considered the masterpiece of the Parnassiens; Anatole France, more widely known as novelist and critic; Catulle Mendès (1841-1909), who has been likened to Swinburne without Swinburne's genius; François Coppée (1842-1908), Academician, the poet of the humble and lowly. These several poets emerged from the cénacle of the “impassibles” to cultivate each his own particular manner.

The reaction against the principles of the Parnassiens made itself felt about 1880 with the appearance of the Decadents. “Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la Décadence,” wrote Verlaine, who with Mallarmé, were the principal masters of this poetic school, later called the Symbolists. De Vigny and Beaudelaire were its precursors in France, but this tendency of poetry was influenced to some extent by German Wagnerism and the English Preraphaelites.¹ The Symbolists wished to create a poetry more supple and unrestrained than the old; and to attain vagueness and subtlety they held that objects should not be named, but suggested by pictures or symbols. Everything that no one understands—not even the poet himself—is called symbolism, says a critic of this eccentric “school,” which Verlaine himself facetiously termed “Cymbalists.” G. Vicaire under the pseudonym of Floupette cleverly parodied the Decadents, in *Les déliquescentes*. These poets never touched the great questions of the age. If they had an aim, it is not apparent; only obscurity emerges from their misty theories. When you have read their poems you feel only that nothing has been said. Verlaine, in his *Art Poétique*, sets forth that in the credo of Symbolism the dreams and mysteries of the poet's recorded thought should

¹ A brotherhood originally consisting (1848) of J. E. Millais, Holman Hunt, and Rossetti, who advocated a closer study of nature, and protested against academic dictum.

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seek an affinity no longer with painting, but with music: "De la musique avant toute chose." The younger generation of Symbolists and Decadents have pushed this theory to an extreme, until their verses became an incredible jargon. Very few persons profess to understand Maeterlinck's first work, *Les Serres chaudes*—a poem without rhyme, rhythm, or—it is scarcely necessary to add—reason. Only the elect in the circle of Arthur Rimbaud have confessed to admiration for his sonnet *Voyelles*, beginning:

A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu, voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes.
A, noir corset velu des manches éclatantes
Qui bombillent autour des puanteurs cruelles,

"There is no joy in this new world" (of the decadents), wrote Lafcadio Hearn—"and scarcely any tenderness: the language is the language of art, but the spirit is of Holbein and the Gothic ages of religious madness." The *Aphrodite* and the *Chansons de Bilitis* of Louÿs appear to him as crimes.

Among the most important Symbolists are Verlaine, the recognized head of the school; de Régnier; Jean Moréas, a Greek; two Americans—Vièle-Griffin and Merrill; and Maeterlinck, a Fleming, whose genius in other vehicles of expression sets him quite apart from the others. Jean Moréas abandoned this school to found the *école romane française*, and counted among his disciples Maurice de Plessys, Raymond de La Talliède, Ernest Raynaud. This school repudiated the Roman-ticists, the Symbolists and the Parnassiens and renewed the Greco-Latin culture.

Jean Richepin (born 1849), a poet of pagan proclivities, and of a somewhat riotously romantic imagination, whose *La Chanson des Gueux* (1876) was deemed an outrage on public morality, has become a sober lecturer to young ladies, and lately was elected to the seat in the Academy vacated by Theuriot.

With Edmond Rostand (born 1864), whose title to poet in the highest sense is disputed, Semain, who died in 1900, and Rodenbach, ideas are no longer neglected, but are admitted to an equal consideration with form and harmony.

French genius does not lean to lyricism. In the first place,

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the admirable clearness and precision of French as a vehicle of prose is, as Professor Saintsbury points out, an obstacle to poetical utterance. Its very sobriety and lucidity is "an enemy to mystery, to vagueness, to what may be called the twilight of sense—all things more or less necessary to the highest poetry." Moreover, in the France of to-day the drama and the novel are the dominant expressions of literature. Another factor not commonly considered is the neglect of folklore—the subordination of the human and the homely to what is purely artificial in subject and treatment. It was the peasants of Southern Europe who for centuries kept lyric poetry alive; French classicism has never cherished it. Malherbe, followed by Boileau, expelled the traditions of folklore from the circles of the learned, and the Revolution administered the final blow. In Germany, Goethe, Uhland, Heine found much of their inspiration in these traditions; in France it has been otherwise. We miss it in the poems of her greatest lyric singers; it is a note that Hugo, Musset, Lamartine, did not strike. Too often have the poets, like the prose writers, of France addressed themselves, for the most part, not to the people, but to the sophisticated circle of Parisians, to the *cafés-chantants* of the capital and provinces.¹

The greatest modern singer of France—far superior to the Parnassiens and the Decadents, from the point of view of poetic sentiment, not artistic style—is Mistral, the Provençal poet. Since the beautiful poetry of the troubadours spent itself and was overcome by the devastating wars in the South of France, an attempt has been made by the people of

¹ Through the efforts of the third Napoleon, a collection of folklore was assembled in manuscript form, but though still preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, it has never been printed. Sébillot and Gaudoz, however, have edited an admirable collection of these traditions, with the title *La France merveilleuse et légendaire*, and the "Mother Goose" stories of Perrault have been continued by Sébillot in the *Contes des provinces de France*. The increasing vogue for songs in the *cafés* and artistic cabarets have produced new genres in the *chanson*: the "*scie*," an oft-recurring refrain, the "*chanson égrillarde*" (subtle and licentious), and the "*chanson rosse*," a cynically realistic song disclosing with biting sarcasm the foibles of humanity. *Rosse* is also used in that sense to designate a play, an author, or a genre in literature.

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Provence to restore the Provençal patois to the dignity of a language (once spoken by perhaps one fourth of the French people) and to revive Provençal literature. What were formerly the troubadours are to-day known as the *Félibres*: in 1854, seven Provençal poets, Roumanille, Aubanel, Mistral, Brunet, Mathieu, Tavan, and Gièra met at the Château of Fontesgugne near Avignon to found a society for the restoration and maintenance of the Provençal language (a branch of the langue d'oc) and literature. They called themselves "félibres," from a word found by Mistral in an old Provençal poem which stated that the Virgin Mary met Jesus "emé le sèt félibre de la lèi" (among the seven doctors of the law). According to Ducange "félibres" in low Latin means "nursling fed on milk"; by extension, as applied to the Provençal poets, "nurslings of the Muses." Their reunions are called "félibriges," and an annual commemoration festival is held on St. Stella's day (twenty-first of May), the date of their organization.¹

Jasmin (Jacques Boé, 1789-1864), called *le perruquier poète* (the barber poet), continued that trade even after he had been the recipient of two great honors: the cross of the Legion of Honor, and the title of "Prince of Poets," awarded by the *Jeux Floraux*. His poems, Jasmin collected under the title of *Les Papillôtos* (the Curl-Papers, with allusion to his trade), and gave recitations of them in the Gascon dialect, throughout France. Everywhere he was enthusiastically applauded, even in Paris at the Court, where Louis-Philippe accorded him a reception. The profits of his recitations amounted to a million and a half francs, all of which Jasmin gave to charity, thus adding another cognomen to his name—philanthropist. Lamartine called him the *Homère sensible des prolétaires*. Longfellow translated his poem *L'Ablugo de Castel-Culié*² (*L'Aveugle de Castel-Culié*).

¹ In 1876 this was subdivided into maintenances placed under the authority of a consistory of fifty members whose shield bears a golden locust.

² "The Blind Girl of Castèl Cuillé." Longfellow writes:

Only the Lowland tongue of Scotland might
Rehearse this little tragedy aright;
Let me attempt it with an English quill,
And take, O Reader, for the deed the will.

RECENT POETRY

In 1852, the Académie Française, awarded to Jasmin the *prix extraordinaire* for his Provençal poems.

The most celebrated of the félibres is Frédéric Mistral (born 1830). His works are *Mirèio* (in French *Mireille*), a beautiful epic in which he revives, with many picturesque episodes, the popular traditions of Provence; *Les isclo d'or* (in French *Les îles d'or*), a collection of poems published in 1871; together with *Lous Trésor dou Félibrige* (in French, *Le Trésor du Félibrige*), and a Provençal-French dictionary. Félix Gras (1841–1901) was the most brilliant of the second generation of félibres.¹ After Mistral and Roumanille, he was proclaimed the chief of the félibrige. Though seventy-nine years of age, Mistral, who refused to accept a seat in the French Academy, is still active in literary work, and recently shared the Nobel prize with Echegaray and Sienkiewicz, the funds of which he contributed to the establishment of a museum at Arles. This contains a costly collection of Provençal costumes and general productions typical of the sunny Provençal country,² and was opened by Mistral during the festival inaugurated May 1909 in his honor, at Arles. The unveiling of his statue erected by his compatriots, and the fiftieth anniversary of the appearance of his famous poem *Mirèio*, were the occasions for the celebration.

In the northern part of France, a branch of the langue d'oïl—the Walloon language—also aspires to its own language and literature. The “Société Liégeoise de Littérature Wallonne,” founded in 1856, has largely contributed to the continued use of the Walloon in parts of Northern France, Belgium, and Rhenish Prussia.

¹ An Irishman, William Bonaparte Wyse, acquired the Provençal language and published a collection of poems *li Parpaïoun blu* (*les Papillons bleus*, The blue Butterflies).

² From Provence came the inspiration of the Minnesingers—German lyric poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—who sang chiefly of love, and were succeeded by the Meistersingers.

CHAPTER XXXI

PHILOSOPHERS

THE philosophy of the first part of the nineteenth century was Christian and spiritual—in direct contrast to that of the eighteenth century, which was atheistic and materialistic. Two schools contributed to this change: “l'école catholique,” whose leaders were Joseph de Maistre, Lamennais, de Bonald, and Ballanche; and “l'école éclectique,” with Victor Cousin, Royer-Collard, and Jouffroy at the head. Joseph, Count de Maistre (1754–1821), in his most popular work, the *Soirées de St. Pétersbourg*, exploited the theories of theocracy and absolute monarchy. This book (written, as were his others, in the early years of the century, at St. Petersburg, where he served as minister for the King of Sardinia) is composed of eleven imaginary conversations, in which the increasing depravity of mankind is set forth in dismal hues—the interlocutors being three Catholics: a Russian senator with a leaning to mysticism, a French *émigré* and man of the world, and the Count de Maistre himself. The idea of expiation, which dominates all his works, is developed in his *Considérations sur la France*—one of the most profound historic philosophical treatises of the nineteenth century. His *Du Pape* presents an apology for the spiritual and temporal power of the Pope as a protection against the oppression of their sovereigns. The Count de Maistre was not only a great thinker, but a writer gifted with extraordinary literary ability. He suffered many reverses and disappointments, but he never ceased to call France the most beautiful kingdom after Heaven.

The Abbé de La Mennais, known as Lamennais, (1782–1854) experienced the most stirring developments in his religious, philosophical, and political views. In his first work, *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* (1817), his opin-

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ions on absolutism and Papal supremacy coincided with those of de Maistre. He attacked atheists, deists, and Protestants, with energetic eloquence—even refusing to class the Protestants as Christians; and declared that in the infallibility of the Pope lay the only escape from anarchy. The book caused an immense sensation, and Lamennais was hailed as a second Bossuet. In reality, the germ of skepticism and revolt lurked behind his argument of “the universal consent,” and not reason, nor the senses, as the criterion of ecclesiastical authority. Pretty soon he found himself in the ranks of the Liberals; and in his articles in the *Avenir* (to which Lacordaire, who carried romanticism into the pulpit, and Montalembert, contributed in the same spirit), he met with Rome’s disapproval. A complete revolution took place in his religious views, expressed in the *Affaires de Rome*, and in the poetical-biblical *Paroles d’un croyant*, in which he broke completely with the Papacy. In his *Livre du Peuple* he proclaimed the fundamental principles of social democracy. It is interesting to note how the literary style of Lamennais—ardent, exuberant at all times, changes with his change of faith. Its brilliance and beauty in his earlier works becomes clouded and disorganized in the productions following his apostasy, and saturated with bitterness and the spirit of rebellion.

Louis Gabriel Ambroise, Vicomte de Bonald (1754–1840), an ardent defender of orthodox religion and monarchy, was instrumental in modifying the law of divorce. His chief work is the *Législation primitive*. Bonald defined man as an intellect supplied with organs. Pierre Simon Ballanche (1776–1847), author of the *Essai sur les institutions sociales* and other works, was one of the wits of Madame Récamier’s salon, at l’Abbaye-aux-Bois. He believed in the expiation of original sin through suffering and remorse, and that in the eventual rehabilitation of the world man would enjoy a perfect life.

Victor Cousin (1792–1867), proclaimed by one of his adversaries, Mgr. Maret, as the greatest philosopher of modern times, was the son of a watchmaker and a laundress. He became a member of the royal council of public instruction, reorganized the national system of primary studies, was elected to the French Academy in 1830, and two years later,

at the age of forty, was made a Peer of France. Cousin as a philosopher drew his inspiration from the Scotchmen, Dugald Stewart and Thomas Reid, and fortified it by a study of Kant, Fichte, and particularly Hegel—making two visits to Germany for this purpose. His theory of eclecticism is somewhat in disfavor to-day; but his introduction of the German philosophers through the medium of his own eloquent style had an important influence on the French philosophy of his times. As professor in the Sorbonne, his lectures aroused the greatest enthusiasm. These were afterwards published under the title, *Sur le fondement des idées absolues du vrai, du beau et du bien*. This book contains a kind of condensation of his doctrines, and has become a classic for the beauty of its style and thought. Briefly, his philosophy was deduced from what he held to be the partial truths embodied in the four systems of materialism, spiritualism, skepticism, and mysticism. The student of literature will be more interested in his stimulating *Biographies* of seventeenth-century personages, written as a recreation when he had passed the age of sixty. His passionate regard for one of his subjects, though no longer in the flesh—the lovely Duchesse de Longueville—has been the occasion for some chaffing on the part of his literary contemporaries.

Pierre Paul Royer-Collard (1763–1845) was the chief of the doctrinaires, among whom are numbered Guizot, Cousin, and Jouffroy.

Auguste Comte (1798–1856), the founder of Positivism, indicated his purpose in the motto: *Réorganiser, sans Dieu ni roi, par le culte systématique de l'humanité*. His *Cours de philosophie positive*, which contains a very lucid exposition of his system, is one of the principal philosophical works of the nineteenth century; his influence, unlike that of his contemporaries, persists to the present day. When Comte created positive philosophy (in which phenomena, observed and classified, replace theological and metaphysical speculation), Émile Littré (1801–81) was one of his most zealous disciples; but when Comte took to mysticism Littré rebelled, and eventually succeeded him as the head of the positivist school.

Here we may speak of Joseph Joubert (1754–1824), who belongs more properly to literature than do some of the

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writers just enumerated. The underlying thought of his *Pensées*—when those thoughts are concerned with ethics—is that nothing in the moral world is lost, just as in the material world nothing is actually destroyed. Joubert's "Thoughts" take a very wide range. All his studious, contemplative life was devoted to compressing his reflections on literature, morals, affairs, into the nutshells of his polished and incisive paragraphs. They are essays in miniature—keen, clear, judicious—in which the critical faculty is very highly developed, and the talent for compression perhaps unexampled.

Joseph Ernest Renan (1823–92)—acknowledged chief of the school of critical philosophy in France—has, because of his profound knowledge, been compared to Montaigne; like Montaigne, his exhaustive researches in the field of thought led him to the same conclusion: "What do I know?" Educated by priests, and, for a time, entertaining some notion of entering the priesthood, his inquiring and scientific spirit soon led him beyond the pale of orthodox religion. He remained, however, as Anatole France has phrased it, in possession of a faith that did not possess him. Lacking convictions, he was swayed by sentiment; he could not escape the memories and impressions of his early training. As he himself says in the delightful *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse* (one of the permanent contributions to French literature), these memories of his youth came back to him like the bells of a lost city rung under water.

Renan's scholarship and broad literary sympathies were united to a charm and warmth of style that is not only agreeable to the critical intelligence, but to popular taste as well. The *Vie de Jésus*, written after a visit to Syria, contains passages representative of the unorthodox views that cost him the chair of Hebrew in the Collège de France; but its circulation was enormous, and was the foundation of his popularity. This work was the first in a series of seven (1863–1881), with the general title, *Histoire des Origines du Christianisme*, the other separate titles being: *Les Apôtres*; *L'Antéchrist*; *St. Paul et sa Mission*; *Les Évangiles et la seconde génération chrétienne*; *L'Église chrétienne*; *Marc-Aurèle*. These were followed (1888–94) by what is really the introduction to the series—the five volumes of the *Histoire du*

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peuple d'Israël. In the interval, his fancy, philosophy and satire found an outlet in the less worthy dramatic compositions collected under the title of *Drames Philosophiques*, and embracing *Caliban*, *L'Eau de Jouvence*, *L'Abbesse de Jouarre*, *Le Prêtre de Nemi*.

In an admirable sketch of M. Renan by the late Theodore Child,¹ we are told that Renanism, among other things, stands for "a refined skepticism so delicately developed that it transforms itself into an instrument of pleasure. . . . The basis of dilettanteism is the doctrine of the legitimacy of many points of view; or, in other words, the consciousness that phenomena are too numerous to allow us to make absolute and exclusive affirmations, at least with our present intellectual apparatus. . . . Great and exquisite as may be the joys procured by dilettanteism, they are of a noncreative and unvisible kind. . . . We should be tempted to call attention to the harmony of M. Renan's physical and intellectual personality, and to compare that great shapeless body to some huge polyp or anemone, floating helplessly in the sea of probabilities, rising or sinking, inclining to the right or to the left, as instinct or a ray of sunlight or the hazards of a current may inspire; but in any case merely floating, and otherwise incapable of choosing a direction or following it."

Renan found much to amuse him in the human comedy; but Taine—his moral and temperamental antithesis—was horrified and saddened by it. Renan's optimism was the product of his physical nature, of sentiment, of a skepticism tolerant and easy-going; Taine's pessimism arose from the operations of an intellect absorbed in scientific classification and committed to a system from which the emotions are rigidly excluded. With a passion for formula and abstraction, and a mind committed to materialistic doctrines, he sought to explain all the productions of literature and art with reference to "the race, the environment, and the moment." From a nation's climate, food, period of production, he would undertake to deduce its poetry and its paintings. His famous formula, that "virtue and vice are products, like sugar and vitriol," so shocked the Academy (in 1863) that he was not

¹ *Harper's Magazine*, August, 1892.

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admitted to membership in that body until 1878. In philosophy and criticism he was the representative of his period, applying to these the same general principles of minute fidelity that Flaubert employed in the novel, Meissonier in painting, and the Parnassiens in poetry. But though he inspired the naturalistic school of novel writers, it is too much to say that their sins are on his head. Indeed, one of his most valorous champions was M. Brunetière, who, having no love for Zola, perceived in Taine's determinist doctrines merely the unbiased, objective attitude of the naturalist who excludes, for intellectual purposes, every esthetic or moral consideration. Taine's honor and glory, according to this distinguished critic, of Catholic faith, rest in this: that he "renewed the methods of criticism," and helped to escort literature from the nebulous regions of exaggerated Romanticism to the solid ground of reality. Taine's supreme test in estimating the value of a work was the "degree of beneficence of its character." Not Victor Cousin himself, remarks M. Brunetière, has said as much. "They simply arrived at analogous conclusions by wholly different roads."

To the American reader, Hippolyte Taine (1828-93) is perhaps the best known of all the modern French critics and philosophers. His *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1865), admirably translated by Van Laun, has been vigorously attacked because of its generalizations, and because it is only nominally a history. On the other hand it has been, and will long continue to be, a *vade mecum* for innumerable readers, young and old, who delight in an author never dull yet never sensational, learned yet always clear, whose opinions are never *ex-cathedra*, who is brilliant without pedantry, and forceful without dogmatism.

Among the other principal productions of his immensely active and vigorous life are: *Les Philosophes classiques du XIX^{me} Siècle en France* (1856); *Notes sur Paris, ou Vie et Opinions de Thomas Graindorge* (1857) a charming book—a humoristic and satirical criticism of Parisian society; *Notes sur l'Angleterre* (1872); and *De l'Intelligence*, his principal philosophical work. His several works on the *Philosophie de l'Art* are the product of his celebrated course of lectures at the École des Beaux-Arts.

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The war of 1870 transformed the philosopher into an historian, and henceforth Taine determined with patriotic fervor to uproot the causes of France's defeat, which gave rise to his most important work *Origines de la France contemporaine* (1875-90), comprising *L'Ancien Régime*, *La Révolution* and the unfinished *Le Régime Moderne*. In this work Taine points out that the French Revolution was a misfortune for France and severely criticises the Jacobin and Napoleon régimes. He also derogates the motto of the French Republic: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.

Taine learned English as a boy from an uncle who had lived in America. When he was fourteen he devised a scheme of study, to which he rigorously adhered and afterwards applied with all the power of his brilliant mind. M. Vacherot, director of studies at the École Normale, predicted that he would be a savant—that, like Spinoza, he would “live in order to think.” Taine, indeed, was “an intellect.” His one recreation appears to have been music; but his devotion to that art can hardly be said to have been emotional. It is altogether characteristic of him that in praising a sonata by Beethoven he remarked, with well-restrained rapture: “It’s as beautiful as a syllogism.”

CHAPTER XXXII

HISTORIANS

ONE of the greatest achievements of the nineteenth century in France was the impulse to historical study, and its consequent evolution first as romantic literature and, later, as a critical science. The treatment of history as a science was quite unknown at the outset of the century; history, in fact, even in its general aspects, was scarcely comprehended at all. The Greeks and Romans were known chiefly in relation to classical literature; the people of the Orient were little more than a myth; even the history of France was imperfectly studied and understood.

The awakening began with the romantic interest of Chateaubriand's *Études sur la chute de l'Empire romain* and his *Analyse raisonnée de l'Histoire de France*; and with the popularity of Sir Walter Scott's historical novels. Nowadays we do not go to fiction for our history; we are warned even to accept with caution such sugar-coated facts as the novelist provides. But at the time of which we speak, romance, as the great Scotchman purveyed it, was hailed as the handmaiden of true history. Indeed, Villemain—the master critic of his school—told his Sorbonne audience (enamored of Sir Walter) that history was less true than the historical novel. Which may be taken as in some sort supplementary to the epigram attributed to Napoleon—that “history is fiction agreed upon.”

With *Ivanhoe* and *Les Martyrs* as a leaven, we see also, in the years of the Restoration, the ferment of intelligence working in the wars along with imagination to evoke a lesson no less than a pageant from the chronicles of the past—scholarship was admitted to new privileges—rubbing elbows with men of affairs, and burrowing in the archives of the state, hitherto closed to the people.

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This passion for historical reconstruction produced three schools of historians: the narrative school—devoted to accuracy of narration and local detail—of which de Barante, with his *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne*, is the conspicuous representative; the philosophical school of Thierry, de Sismondi, Guizot, who endeavored to establish the connection of cause and effect in historical events; and the fatalistic school, of which Thiers and Mignet were the chiefs. This somewhat arbitrary classification does not include Michelet—the most remarkable historian of them all considered with relation to literature—a man whose glowing imagination and extraordinary style set him apart from and above the more sober and scientific chroniclers of the past.

The real founders of the new historical school were Thierry and Guizot—the first historians who laid stress on the social and political development of the people, instead of centering attention on the royal families and the dynastic wars. We observe the application of this new method—made possible by the Revolution—in the *Lettres sur l'histoire de France* of Augustin Thierry (1795–1856). Thierry himself has told us the impression made on his boyish imagination by a page of Chateaubriand's *Martyrs*. In his enthusiasm he arose, chanting the song: *Pharamond! Pharamond! nous avons combattu avec l'épée*—and marching to its rhythm. From that moment he was determined to be an historian. Thierry's style in the *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* is almost dramatic; by the vividness of his descriptive powers he makes the dead past live again. Yet the scientific nature of his work is one of its greatest merits; it is, first of all, based on the patient and scholarly examination of chronicles and ancient documents. He was a breaker of new ground, and his ceaseless researches and study of old manuscripts so affected his eyesight that he became totally blind. To this affliction he resigned himself without a murmur, saying, *J'ai fait amitié avec les ténèbres* (I made a friend of darkness). Nor did it curtail his labors. Such men as Paul-Louis Courier, Carrel, Béranger, lent him their assistance; the young woman he married became his devoted secretary—reading aloud to him, sometimes for fifteen hours a day. Thus, with his epic imagination, he was able to produce

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such masterpieces as the *Récits des temps mérovingiens* (1840)—a beautiful and accurate description of France at the very beginning of her history, in which he overturned the puerile conceptions that had prevailed concerning the first Frankish kings. His *Dix ans d'études historiques* and the essay on the formation and progress of the *Tiers-État* have the purely historical rather than the literary flavor.

François Guizot (1787-1874)—austere, solemn, dogmatic—is the philosopher first and last, the interpreter of history in the light of theories and ideas. He explains rather than describes the tumultuous course of events. Guizot, whose touch is heavy, busied himself with literary work during all of his useful life; but he was not primarily a writer, and he did not pretend to be. Common sense and a solid array of imposing facts philosophically presented are the uppermost qualities in those vast syntheses, the *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe*, and the *Histoire de la civilisation en France*. He is the founder of political and social history in France. Aside from his own personal contributions to the subject, he greatly stimulated historical research during his term of office as minister of public instruction; committees were appointed, the state archives were overhauled, and their precious contents scrutinized, edited, printed.

Sentiment has no place in the oratory and writings of Guizot, yet his private life discloses a pretty romance. Hearing that two distinguished women, Madame de Meulan and her daughter, were in pecuniary distress, owing to Mademoiselle de Meulan's illness, which incapacitated her as a regular contributor to the *Publiciste*, Guizot himself (then a youth of twenty) wrote an article, in her style, and sent it to her with an explanatory letter signed "Inconnu." He followed it up with similar contributions, until she had recovered her strength. These articles duly appeared in the *Publiciste*, beginning with the issue of March, 1807, and were signed with the initial "F." Eventually the ladies discovered the identity of the man who had committed this gallant fraud, and a few years later Pauline de Meulan became Madame Guizot.

Guizot, who was ambassador to London, and afterwards prime minister, was greatly respected for his honesty and disinterestedness. His last words to his grandchildren were:

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“ Serve your country. The task is sometimes hard; but serve your country well.”

Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877), eulogist of his countrymen, whose failings are not apparent to him, was the first historian to deal with questions of finance, diplomacy, and administration. He was the political rival of Guizot, from whom he differed in the faculty of his talent and the fertility of his expedients. His *Histoire de la Révolution française*, completed when he was but thirty years of age, made him famous, and holds its place with his trustworthy *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, a work remarkable as a narrative, but somewhat inferior from a philosophical or scientific standpoint. Like Mignet, he was a fatalist. The historian par excellence of affairs, his style is simple, clear, and natural. Thiers was alone among the deputies of the Chamber in opposing the declaration of war against Prussia. But later the wisdom of his course, as seen in the perspective of national humiliation, was acknowledged, and he was chosen President of the Republic. To him belongs the glory of extinguishing the revolutionary spirit of the Commune, and of freeing French territory from foreign occupation.

François Mignet (1796–1884) in his *Histoire de la Révolution française* produced a work that has been widely translated (in Germany alone it has had six translators), and is regarded as the best of the brief histories on the subject. His style is the reverse of picturesque, his distinctive merit consisting in his talent for condensation. He treats the Revolution as a natural and inevitable development. Among his other works are three concerned with important episodes of modern history: *La Conquête de la Germanie au Christianisme*, *La Formation territoriale de la France*, and *La Réforme*.

Jules Michelet (1798–1874), of whom it has been said that he combined the learning of a Benedictine monk with the humorous fancy of a poet, is one of the most brilliant and original writers of modern prose. His style, which has been likened to that of Hugo and Carlyle, is spasmodic, but highly decorative, picturesque, and vivid. His power of visualization, the sympathy and intensity of his mind, are such, that he reanimates the past, and makes the dead walk again. An

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historian with such a temperament is not without his faults, and Michelet's faults are palpable. He was a priest hater, an Anglophobe, an uncompromising democrat. For the Jesuits he entertained much the same feeling the devil is supposed to have for holy water. This passion, indeed, so grew with what it fed upon that it distorted his later work. In the earlier volumes of his elaborate *Histoire de France* (which appeared at intervals from 1833 to 1867) his imagination and literary skill were supremely employed in his account of the Middle Ages. But from the time of his attacks on the clergy, in the early forties, in which he was associated with Edgar Quinet, his historical manner suffered from his vehemence. He apologized for his sympathetic treatment of mediæval times, and forthwith produced a *Histoire de la Révolution Française* that is altogether unreliable.

Aside from his great history (for great it is in spite of its defects), Michelet wrote a number of poetical and imaginative studies in physical science and sociology that are characteristic of his genius. Among them are: *La Mer, La Montagne, L'Oiseau, L'Amour, La Sorcière*. These studies were the product of his self-imposed exile in Brittany and on the Riviera, after his refusal to take the oath of allegiance to Napoleon, in 1851, had cost him his government offices.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59), whose dispassionate and penetrating study of American institutions, *La Démocratie en Amérique*, has become a classic, came to the United States with the primary object of studying our prison system. His later work, of equal importance, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* is a philosophical exposition of the subject exact in research and illuminating in treatment. In elegance and directness of style he resembles Montesquieu, and his "Democracy in America" has been called a continuation of the *Esprit des lois*.

Fustel de Coulanges (1830-89), who, according to Lanson, is a great historian and a great writer, is distinguished by his *La Cité Antique* and the *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*—profound and comprehensive studies of ancient societies written in a concise style of severe simplicity.

Lanfrey has contributed an iconoclastic history of Napo-

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leon; Henri Martin an elaborate and impartial history of France. A belated, but notable publication is the *Mémoires* of Madame de Rémusat. The last years of the nineteenth century teem with historical works of no mean order, written for the most part in the modern naturalistic and scientific manner that is or is not, as the case may be, associated with the literary faculty in the highest sense of that term. We may mention the Duc de Broglie's facile recountal of eighteenth-century intrigues of the court: *Le Secret du Roi, Louis XV, Marie-Thérèse*; Albert Sorel's descriptions of diplomacy in revolutionary times; Thureau Dangin's admirable narrative, *La Monarchie de Juillet*, and the eighteenth-century studies of Ernest Lavisse. In conclusion, there are critics who lean to the view of our own Professor Wells, when he says: "The naturalistic evolution has doubtless been a gain to history as a science, but it has been at the cost of its literary value. . . . Never have single movements or periods been studied with more zeal or acumen; yet our diligent investigators do not command the place in literature nor in popular esteem that was won by their romantic predecessors."

CHAPTER XXXIII

CRITICS

"*La critique est aisée et l'art est difficile*," wrote Destouches, who, it is needless to say, was no critic, but a playwright. Destouches, writing a century before modern criticism had cut loose from the hard-and-fast traditions of the absolute, could not foresee the time when the true critic would be defined as "an artist, a philosopher, a moralist—in short, something more than a judge." Criticism, indeed, was to become a rare and difficult art, no longer employing the measuring rule of abstract conventions and rigid formulas, but calling for wide sympathies and knowledge, a perception and understanding of both men and books. Two centuries after the birth of Destouches it was to find in Anatole France, himself a creative writer, a practitioner who sees criticism as the issue of philosophy and history—"of all literary forms the last in date, and eventually absorbing them all." It was to make itself felt through the philosophy of men like Renan and Taine, and to inspire and stimulate entire schools of critics, novelists, poets. In one form or another it was to animate and enrich the newspaper and periodical press with the standards set by the genius of Gautier and the abiding talent of the lively Janin.

The French critics of the First Empire were Madame de Staël, who considered literature in its relation to social institutions, and Julien Louis Geoffroy (1743-1814), a dramatic critic of some importance in his day and generation, but of no special significance in the development of criticism. He is chiefly interesting as the first of the dramatic specialists in that department of criticism which the French have made their own, its most notable exponents being Jules Janin, Jules Lemaitre, and Francisque Sarcey. The severity of

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Geoffroy's criticisms, which were not exclusively dramatic, earned for him the surname of "the terrible." A certain poet, stung by his attacks, retorted with an epigram addressed to the street of *Geoffroy-Ânier*, to which Geoffroy replied with these verses:

Oui, je suis un ânier, sans doute,
Et je le prouve à coups de fouet,
Que j'applique à chaque baudet
Que je rencontre sur la route.¹

Under the Restoration criticism began to take an important place in the history of letters. With the triumph of the Romantic movement it became a guiding influence that has suffered little interruption; towards the end of the century it renewed its vigor and its vogue. Villemain (1790-1870), professor of literature at the Sorbonne, was the pioneer of the newer academic criticism; he broadened and humanized the critical treatment of history by making it descriptive and pictorial. His younger contemporary, D. Nisard (1806-84), clung to the old traditions, and did his best to stem the rising tide of Romanticism. With these must be mentioned the Swiss, Alexandre Vinet (1797-1847), whose methods were allied to Nisard's; Saint-Marc Girardin, who held to a middle course; Gustave Planche, an uncompromising dogmatist; Philarète Chasles, who discussed English literature with some animation of style; E. M. Caro, some of whose interesting studies of French writers have found their way into English translations; Eugène Géroze, who left us a short history of French literature that has not been excelled in its kind.

Meanwhile, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-69), by far the greatest literary critic that France has yet produced, had lent the weight of his great authority and revolutionary method to the principles espoused by the rebellious Romanticists of 1830. In poetry and fiction those principles have suffered from the invasions of succeeding creative schools, but the critical method inaugurated by Sainte-Beuve

¹ Yes, I am an ass-driver, without doubt, and I prove it with blows of the whip which I apply on every donkey that I meet on the road.

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has remained a model that no assault of dogmatism has undermined. That method consisted, in the first place, in ignoring the traditional rules and theories to which the various kinds of literature were supposed to conform, and in taking into consideration the author's purpose and particular accomplishment, without reference to an artificial standard. Rejecting such a standard, Sainte-Beuve arrived at his estimate through a catholic and universal view of literature, fortified by tolerance and sound taste. In the second place, his criticism took into account the life of the writer, and the special circumstances attending the production of his work. It was biographical criticism in the best sense—a kind of natural history of each author's genius. His works comprise some fifty volumes, including the comprehensive *Histoire de Port-Royal*. He was the Boileau of his century, and his critical essays—many of them first published in the columns of the press—dominated the literary judgments of the times. The seven volumes of the *Portraits littéraires* and the thirteen volumes of the *Causeries du lundi* contain estimates—masterly and sympathetic—of nearly all the great French writers, together with many foreign ones.

French criticism has met with the reproach that however brilliant and sound it may be, it suffers in a measure from that national conservatism, or self-sufficiency, which judges the literature of France according to its own standards, and without knowledge of foreign productions. One of the critics who does not fall under this reproach is Edmond Scherer (1815–89), whose numerous studies of contemporary writers—contributed to various French journals—possess a special value. Scherer had strong and singular prejudices, and certain limitations of sympathy that disqualified him as a critic of more than one great writer who offended his notions of propriety and ordered genius; but, if one keeps in view his pet animosities, he will be seen to rank among the foremost of the critical fraternity.

The critical work of Renan and Taine has been touched upon in preceding pages. No critic of their stature has arisen in the France of to-day; but this special function of letters is brilliantly discharged by Anatole France, Jules Lemaitre, and Émile Faguet. In Anatole France the dil-

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ettantism of Renan is perpetuated in a style charming for its grace and effective in its insinuating irony; his criticisms—mainly allied to journalism—are in part collected in the two volumes of *La Vie littéraire*. Lemaître is, above all, the apostle of cleverness; the scintillations of his style, as first exhibited in the literary essays collected under the title, *Les Contemporains* (1886), captured the Parisian fancy. In the numerous volumes of *Impressions de théâtre* are assembled the opinions of a dramatic critic who has made the stage his pretext for lively dissertations upon society—the essays of a witty moralist whose actual value as a censor of life and art is still to be determined. Very different in manner is Lemaître's successor as dramatic critic on the *Journal des Débats*—the sober and scholarly Faguet, whose analytic method is a compromise between the severity of Brunetière and the temperamental transcriptions of the impressionists. His studies of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century writers are his most important work.

In the death of Ferdinand Brunetière (1849–1907) French letters lost a critical leader whose influence on contemporary thought was very considerable. M. Brunetière in his methods was the antithesis of the school represented by Anatole France. His cardinal qualities are logic, learning, and a rigorous habit of mind that tolerates no trifling by the decadents of literature. He stood for the best traditions of the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, with which he was so long associated, and his great erudition, loftiness of purpose and intellectual grasp were respected even by those who attacked him because of his dogmatism and somewhat pedagogic attitude. M. Brunetière's logical powers, capacity for synthesis, and solid literary attainments find their highest expression in his comprehensive *Évolution des Genres dans l'Histoire de la Littérature Française*. Some acquaintance with his copious output of essays is needful to those readers who would rightly observe the various forces at work in modern France.

The doctrinal and the impressionistic schools of critics have for twenty years waged a controversy always acute and occasionally bitter. In illustration of their opposing attitudes a French writer offers this example: Two spectators witness

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a performance of the melodrama, "The Two Orphans." Both are moved to tears. One of them says: "I have been interested, touched; I have wept: therefore, this play is a masterpiece." He is an impressionist. The other one says: "It is true I have wept; doubtless I would weep if I returned to-morrow. Nevertheless, on reflection, I must tell myself that the devices employed by the author to make me weep are artificial, and that there is in his play only the appearance of human truth. It is not, then, a literary work." This critic is a doctrinaire.

Faguet says: "The flood of critical literature of the nineteenth century is one of the scourges of this period, and in the eyes of posterity it will appear ridiculous that the nineteenth century produced fewer books in the proper sense of the word than books dedicated to their criticism. But all real novelty incurs this misfortune, and in our day there is a deluge of critical works, just as in the seventeenth century there was a deluge of tragedies, and in 1830 of elegiac verse."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MODERN DRAMA

CORNEILLE, Racine, Voltaire not only dominated the stage in their day, but held unchallenged sway over the theater-going public until 1827, when the insurrectional proclamation in the *Préface de Cromwell* heralded the romantic drama—"everything which is in nature is in art." The classicists were only for a time obscured, but tragedy as a genre was lost in this vigorous and trivial form of the melodrama.

The apparent great victory of Romanticism had but an ephemeral existence, however, and with the failure of *Les Burgraves* in 1843, it suffered a rapid decline; Racine and Corneille, momentarily eclipsed, were restored to favor, and shone with enhanced beauty through the marvelous interpretation of the great Rachel. These tragedies still endure, but the dramas of Hugo are fast becoming obsolete. Hugo's conception of the truth—the natural combination of the sublime and the grotesque which must meet in the drama as they occur in life and in creation—characterizes his entire dramaturgy. Of the many dramatists: de Vigny, de Musset, Alexandre Dumas *père*, Prosper Mérimée, who followed in Hugo's footsteps, not one has been able to hold the stage. A decadence began and melodrama finally sustained only by the genial interpretation of great actors deteriorated so markedly, that public taste soon turned to the comedy of manners and the psychological play.

Since the time of Victor Hugo, France has produced three men whom general consent accords a place above their brethren in the long list of her brilliant modern playwrights. These three, in the order of critical esteem, are Augier, Dumas *fils*, and Sardou. A rapid survey—less with regard to chronology than to other considerations which seem upper-

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most in an attempt to comprehend the complicated and contradictory expressions of the modern French dramatic literature—will perhaps suffice to make clear why it is at the same time so wondrous and so weak. The circumstance that Victorien Sardou¹ is assigned a niche in the dramatic Pantheon as one of the three surpassing playwrights seems at first glance to involve a paradox, and to constitute in itself an indictment of that French dramatic genius which, whatever its limitations, outshines by far the rush-candle of sister nations. The analytical criticism of a distinguished contributor to the London *Saturday Review*, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, sums up the notorious defects of M. Sardou's methods in one irreverent word—"Sardoodledom," an epithet suggesting in its etymology the reprisal of a Yankee vexed by Sardou's satire *L'Oncle Sam* (1873). It is not, however, American flippancy, but British conservatism that speaks in the *Saturday Review*. The play is Merivale's English version of *Fédora*, with Mrs. Patrick Campbell in the title part. "I had seen Diplomacy Dora, and Theodora, and La Toscadora, and other machine dolls from the same firm," says Mr. Shaw. "And yet the thing took me aback. To see that curtain go up again and again only to disclose a bewildering profusion of everything that has no business in a play was an experience for which nothing could quite prepare me. The postal arrangements, the telegraphic arrangements, the police arrangements, the names and addresses, the hours and seasons, the tables of consanguinity, the railway and shipping time-tables, the arrivals and departures, the whole welter of Bradshaw and Baedeker, Court Guide and Post Office Directory, whirling round one little incredible stage murder and finally vanishing in a gulp of impossible stage poison, made up an entertainment too Bedlamite for any man with settled wits to preconceive."

This depreciation of one of M. Sardou's most popular and thrilling plays² was delivered in May, 1895. Lest it seem

¹ Born in Paris, September 7, 1831, died 1908.

² "With its superbly tragic end," writes a German critic; with a death scene which "begins like a feeble drawing-room plagiarism of the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes, and ends with Gilbertian absurdity," remarks the spokesman for the *Review*.

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an expression of that singular prejudice¹ reproved by Mrs. Browning,² it is interesting to observe that some years antecedent to that date—namely, in May, 1878—this depreciation was anticipated by a *confrère* of M. Sardou, on the occasion of the playwright's admission to the Academy. Addressed orally and directly to his human subject, and not from the vantage of the critic's office chair, M. Charles Blanc's ironic response to M. Sardou's reception speech was necessarily veiled in terms of adroit and subtle raillery that to duller apprehensions would have passed for praise. A brief extract from this "address of welcome" is worth quoting here for more than one reason. It not only sustains the judgment of Mr. Shaw, but is a model of that polite criticism which Prof. Brander Matthews (to whom we are indebted for the extract) long ago held to be the only proper attitude of a critic who would also be a gentleman. M. Blanc said:

"I admire the skillful ordering of the room in which passes the action of your characters, the care you take in putting each in his place, in choosing the furniture which surrounds them, which is always not only of the style required—that goes without saying—but significant, expressive, fitted to aid in the turns of the drama. . . . The letter!—it plays a part in most of your plots; and all of it is important, the wrapper as well as its contents. The envelope, the seal, the wax, the postage stamp, and the postmark, and the tint of the paper and the perfume which rises from it, not to speak of the handwriting, close or free, large or small—how many things in a letter, as handled by you, may be irrefutable evidence to betray the lovers, to denounce the villains, and to warn the jealous!"

But though Sardou is a past master of "properties," a "supremely skillful contriver and arranger," a "journalistic" playwright, with an eye to what an American manager would call "contemporaneous human interest," a theatrical prestidigitator whose art consists in diverting your attention,

¹ A prejudice which, in the case of the *Saturday Review*, intermittently breaks out in symptoms of disapproval of things American.

² The English have a scornful insular way
Of calling the French light.—*Aurora Leigh*.

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by wit and mystification, from a mechanism otherwise too obvious; though he is, as it were, a *Deus ex machina*, it must not be overlooked that he is a great deal more than this. His immense and varied output since the early period of obscurity and starvation (1850-60)—since his first poetic play, *La Taverne des Étudiants*, was hissed from the stage of the Odéon (1854)—has embraced some fifty-five plays of many types, ranging through farce, satire, opera, melodrama, and the poetic spectacular. If we must put, say *Odette*, and *Delia Harding*, and *Théodora*—to name no others—in the category of artistic failures, and pass over in silence some plays condemned to a failure still more comprehensive, we must remember that his best work affords the truest criterion of his powers. *Rabagas* (1871)—in which the dramatist impaled the demagogue on a pen of merciless satire and ridicule—is pronounced by a German critic to be “the best political comedy since Aristophanes.” Prof. Saintsbury regards it as “one of the few comedies of this age likely to become classical.” Sardou’s dominant motive in writing this play was to hold up Gambetta, the Republican leader, to ridicule and contempt. But the playwright builded better than he knew, and the thirst for personal reprisal became, in his picture of political hypocrisy, a bid for more than fleeting fame. His delightful *La Famille Benoiton* (1865) is a social satire in which he exposes the immoral love for luxury of a pleasure-mad family in the days of the Second Empire. In the same vein of abounding wit and satire are his first great successes, *Nos Intimes*¹ (1861), *Nos Bons Villageois* (1866), and *Fernande* (1870). The latter, which is to some extent a departure from Sardou’s customary technical methods, pictures “the exquisite elevation of a young soul which has preserved itself pure in the midst of all the impurities of a gambling hell.” Sardou’s innocent young women (in *Séraphine*, in *Patrie*, in *Nos bons Villageois*, for example) are indeed some compensation to the morally fastidious for his

¹ Various adapted in England and America as “Peril,” “Friends or Foes?” and “Bosom Friends.” The famous love scene in *Nos Intimes* was taken by Sardou from one of his early attempts, submitted to the manager of the Gymnase, with the title, *Paris à l’Envers*.

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offenses of bad taste, insincerity, and questionable judgment in such plays as *Divorçons* (1880), *Maison Neuve* (1866), and *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy* (1878). *Dora* (1877)—somewhat mutilated in the English versions—is well known to Americans under the title of “Diplomacy.” A factor in its Anglo-American success was the acting of the Kendals and, later, of Charles Coghlan. It is a good specimen of the Sardou craftsmanship. As an entertainer pure and simple, Sardou has perhaps produced nothing better than *Les Pattes de Mouche* (1860), known to the German stage as “The Lost Letter,” and in the United States—where it has enjoyed a considerable vogue—as “A Scrap of Paper.”¹

Sardou's endeavors in serious drama of the romantic-historical type are represented by several works, of which the sixteenth-century play *Patrie* (1869)—concerned with the theme illumined by Motley in his “Rise of the Dutch Republic”—is the best. *Patrie* proceeded from a profounder observation of life and a larger power for historical reconstruction than we find in his *Thermidor* (1891) and his *Robespierre*. Provoked by the failure of some of his plays in Paris, Sardou confined the production of *Robespierre* (1899) and *Le Dante* (1903) to London.

The purely theatrical effectiveness of *La Tosca* (1887), is severely criticised by Jules Lemaitre, who says of Scarpia: “He is atrocious; he is of a supernatural atrocity. Do not, I beg of you, compare him with Richard III, with Iago, with Nero, who are men of parts, complex, artists.” Bernard Shaw calls *La Gismonda*, Sardou's “latest edition of the Kiralfian entertainment . . . and which is surpassingly dreary, although it is happily relieved four times by very long waits between the acts.”² This critical scrutiny by aliens goes back much

¹ The germ of this play is contained in Edgar Allan Poe's short story, “The Purloined Letter”; but Sardou, in refuting accusations of culpable plagiarism in this and other instances, successfully defended himself in the courts. In 1883 he wrote *Mes Plagiats* by way of reply to such charges. As a matter of fact, he has rather preferred to borrow from himself—many of his characters and ideas being but slight variations of his earlier works.

² See *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, by G. Bernard Shaw (Brentano's, 1906), who further remarks: “The scene being laid in the Middle Ages, there are no newspapers, letters, or telegrams; but this is far from being

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farther than the period of these particular triumphs—namely, in 1877—a British critic of reputation put himself on record thus: “Whatever style will best succeed with the public is the style of V. Sardou.” Quoting Jules Claretie—who calls Sardou a “barometer dramatist”—Professor Matthews, applying the methods of a dramatic archæologist and noting that Sardou’s plays are written distinctly to suit the taste of the moment, suggests that “it would not be difficult for anyone familiar with politics and society in France for the last score of years to declare the date of almost any of M. Sardou’s five-act comedies from a cursory inspection of its allusions.”

With respect to his latest productions, including some flat failures, Sardou is perhaps at his happiest when he drops melodrama and spectacle, and reverts to farce (historically flavored) as in *Madame Sans-Gêne*¹ (1893). The semi-comic Napoleon of this play may, it is true, seem little more than a lay figure; but Sardou, we believe, had the immediate and concrete Mademoiselle Jane Hading in mind, rather than the evasive and tantalizing Thalia—and this accomplished actress, together with Miss Ellen Terry, has doubtless justified to many persons the plan of “writing around” an individual player.

Professor Saintsbury calls Sardou “a Beaumarchais, partly *manqué*”—an expression which we can translate only by availing ourselves of the American vernacular—a *near-Beaumarchais*. A survivor of his period and his group, he has taken no part in shaping anew the unknown destinies of the French drama, and cannot be put on the same level as Dumas and Augier.

In view of the recent propaganda by certain zealous Frenchmen, who are fearful that Americans derive their notions of French domestic life from the popular novel of

an advantage, as the characters tell each other the news all through, except when a child is dropped into a tiger’s cage as a cue for Madame Bernhardt’s popular scream; or when the inevitable stale, puerile love scene is turned on to show off that *voix céleste* stop which Madame Bernhardt, like a sentimental New England villager with an American organ, keeps always pulled out.”

¹ Written, as was *Cléopâtre*, in collaboration with M. Émile Moreau.

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intrigue, it does not seem likely that the plays of Alexandre Dumas *fils* would be recommended by them as representative of the national genius. Yet the younger Dumas (1824-95) was, by intention, a moralist and reformer first of all, and, within the narrow limitations of his choice of subjects, he succeeded in establishing for himself a reputation second only to that of Augier. French criticism has reproached English literature in some of its most cherished manifestations with the fault of didacticism, yet it would be hard to discover a more complete example of art with an ethical purpose than is afforded by the preaching playwright, Alexandre Dumas *fils* . It was a tendency in which the elder Dumas, given over to romanticism, saw, or affected to see, the ultimate ruin of his son's reputation. Francisque Sarcey took it less seriously. He perceived very clearly that the younger man's superb craftsmanship, and his ability to write brilliant, telling dialogue, outweighed his shortcomings as a profound exponent of human life. Sarcey pointed out that the astonishing prefaces to the printed plays are "a chaos of clear ideas"—that is to say, an assemblage of ideas without logical relation. He saw in Dumas an agitator rather than a philosopher; but—"he stirred up a great many questions; he drew upon them our distracted attention; he compelled us to think of them. Therein he did his duty as a dramatist."

Curiously enough, Dumas is best known to Americans by his first and weakest play, *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848), which was performed at the Vaudeville only after successive rejections. *Camille*, as it is known to us in the Anglicized, and somewhat Bowdlerized, versions, is a sentimental idealization of the courtesan; and probably owes its enduring popularity to the opportunities it affords "emotional" actresses. It is interesting to recall that Paris theatrical managers of the mid-nineteenth century regarded it as rather too shocking for Paris audiences; but it met with an instantaneous success, due in a measure to its departure from cut-and-dried traditions of characterization.

Dumas had already written a book of youthful poems, and several novels of some merit; but his fame as a playwright has quite eclipsed the *Aventures de Quatre Femmes et d'un Perroquet* (1847), the *Affaire Clémenceau* (1846), and

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Tristan le Roux (1849). *La Dame aux Camélias* had first appeared as a novel, and as such it is still widely read; Dumas tells us that it took him just eight days to transform it into a play. In 1853 he attempted to follow up his first dramatic success by dramatizing his novel, *Diane de Lys*, written in 1851; he was so far successful that he was enabled to work at his leisure on *Le Demi-Monde* (1855). This play, which some readers will recognize under the title of "The Crust of Society," is perhaps his most important work. The term "demi-monde" was invented by him to describe a social class (*la classe des déclassés*), "who wish to have it believed that they have been what they are not, and who do not wish to appear what they are." But in spite of the author's attempt to force his definition on the public, the term *demi-monde* is usually applied to that class of women known as *femmes galantes*. The author's conception of the term is clearly brought out in the following celebrated passage from *Le Demi-Monde*, an example of the playwright's brilliant style:

"*Raymond*.—In what world are we? In truth, I do not understand it at all.

"*Olivier*.—Ah, my dear fellow, it is necessary to live for a long time in intimacy with the Parisian world to understand its various shades; and even then it is not easy to explain matters. Do you care for peaches?

"*Raymond*.—Peaches? Yes.

"*Olivier*.—Very well. Go to a fruiterer, to Chevez or Potel, and ask for his best peaches. He will show you a basket containing magnificent specimens of fruit, placed at some distance one from the other, and carefully separated by partitions, so that they will not touch each other, and become spoiled by contact. Ask the price, and he will say, 'Twenty sous a piece,' I suppose. Look, then, and you will surely see in the neighborhood of this basket another basket filled with peaches just as fine in appearance as the first, only placed closer together, and so arranged that they cannot be seen from all sides, which the dealer has not offered you at all. Say to him, 'How much are these?' He will answer, 'Fifteen sous.' You will naturally ask him why these peaches, as large, as fine, as ripe, as appetizing, cost less than the others. Then he will take up one at random most deli-

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cately, and poising it between two fingers, he will turn it and will show you a small black spot which is the cause of the inferior price. Well, my dear fellow, you are now in the basket of peaches at fifteen sous. The women by whom you are surrounded have all committed some indiscretion in the past; each one has a blot on her fair name. You see them close together, so they are as little conspicuous as possible. And thus, with the same birth, the same appearance, the same tastes as the women of society, they are not of them, but compose what we may call the *demi-monde*, which is neither the aristocracy nor the bourgeoisie, but forms a floating island in the ocean of Parisian life, and recruits itself from those who have fallen, those who seek refuge here, all who have come here from two continents, whom one meets everywhere, who have come, one knows not from where."

The early environment of Dumas determined in a measure his selection of dramatic themes. An illegitimate son, his school days were embittered by the cruel gibes of his companions; and it is not surprising that in later years he frequently employed his pen to secure the rights of the illegitimate child. His prefaces to *La Femme de Claude* (1873), and *L'Affaire Clémenceau* are eloquent on the subject. In his preface to *Monsieur Alphonse* (1873), a typical conception, he says: "In the midst of the diverse horrors arising from human cupidity and human stupidity, there is but one creature deserving of continuous and repeated, and incessant aid, because, when in misery, it is rendered so wholly without any fault of its own—the child." His material for *La Dame aux Camélias* was gathered at first hand during the days of tumultuous experience, before he was confronted with the problem of earning a living. Thereafter the problem play, rather than the play of sheer sentimentality, engaged his energies; and, in one form or another, the problem was much the same—woman in her sexual relation to man. An avowed preacher and reformer, no one has yet discovered that he formulated a consistent code of ethics. His *raisonneur*—the character put forward in each of his plays as a mouthpiece for his arguments—assumes protean shapes. In *Les Idées de Madame Aubray* (1867) Dumas inculcated the duty of the seducer to marry his victim. In *La Femme de Claude*, the in-

junction is a repetition of his advice to hoodwinked husbands (as set forth in his pamphlet, *L'Homme-Femme* a year earlier): "Tue-la!"¹ The various plays in which the husband, wife, or lover—as the case may be—is killed would require some tabulation. "More attracted," says Jules Lemaître, "by the moral question, than by life itself, and occupied in comprehending life rather than in depicting it, it follows that the plays of M. Dumas have too much of the personality of M. Dumas."

From the Anglo-Saxon point of view, it can hardly be said that Dumas "saw life steadily and saw it whole." In a greater degree even than most of the other modern French playwrights he saw it as it is reflected from a certain angle in Paris. Meanwhile the problem play has crossed the Channel, where its influence is manifest in the works of some of the most eminent English playwrights. That Dumas was very much in earnest in his pursuit of an ethical purpose cannot perhaps be questioned, but unfortunately, as Doumic says, to back his just and even sound ideas, he was often paradoxical, and his situations were almost always ticklish (scabreuses). In his preface to *Un père prodigue* (1859) Dumas has made a candid confession: "A man may lack merit as a thinker, a moralist, a philosopher, an author, yet, nevertheless, become a playwright of the first class—that is to say, in setting in motion before you the purely external movements of humanity."

Among other plays of this master craftsman are *La Question d'argent* (1857); *Le Fils naturel* (1858), one of his most effective dramas; *L'Ami des femmes* (1864), a very strong, subtle play written in a superb style; *La Supplique d'une femme* (1865), a three-act play palpitating with movement, and occupying but an hour and a half in the performance; *L'Étrangère* (1876). Dumas was instrumental in bringing about the divorce laws of France (1884). In his introduction to *L'Étrangère* he wrote: "The Chambers need only ratify divorce, an immediate result would be the complete transposi-

¹ "Kill her!" The French law, as a matter of fact, permitted a wronged husband to take just such summary revenge, and the unwritten law not unfrequently does here.

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tion of our stage. The deceived husbands of Molière and the unhappy women of the modern plays, would completely disappear from the scene." *Denise* (1885), is considered one of his strongest and most dramatic plays, in which, however, repugnant truths are made too aggressively prominent; in *Francillon* (1887), Dumas's skill in construction is matched only by his adroitness in the surprise of the climax. Dumas was admitted to the French Academy in 1874.

Where Dumas, despite, or because of, his brilliant rhetoric, falls short as an ethical teacher, Émile Augier (1820-89) succeeds by virtue of his larger outlook, his sound morality, and his happier and more wholesome treatment of social questions. Augier, says a French critic, has a "sanguine" temperament. He becomes angry and tranquil, he flies into a passion, but he is merciful; Dumas is choleric; he is merciless and takes fierce revenge; Sardou, is above all nervous: he has passing caprices and paroxysms of gayety.

Augier's art is an inheritance from Molière and Beaumarchais. In the hands of Dumas a delicate and dangerous subject was apt to take on the tones of melodrama; under Augier's treatment it became a picture of life. Dumas and Sardou's effects are respectively attained through appeals to the emotions and to ingenious devices of plot; Augier's bid for immortality is through the analysis and exposition of character. Hence he enjoys a prééminence at home, while abroad he is little more than a name.

Augier rejoiced in a grandfather (Pigault-Lebrun) who wrote a great many popular novels now forgotten. To this ancestral strain, it is presumed, he owed his literary bent, which set him to writing plays before he began to practice law, and pretty soon justified his change in the choice of a profession. Augier's great merit lay in his excellent portraiture of French bourgeois society. Common sense was the dominant feature in his plays. This tendency did not find favor with the critics, led by Théophile Gautier, Vacquerie, and other romanticists, who called it "l'école du bon sens."

Augier was above all a man of domestic tastes; devoted to his home, it was the sanctity of the home that he upheld in his dramatic work. After a century of ill usage, by French dramatists, the husband finally came into his rights on the

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stage with Augier. While other playwrights were the apologists of libertinage, Augier courageously undertook the defense of the family and protested against conjugal infidelity. This spirit animates his plays *L'Aventurière* (1848) regarded by some critics as his masterpiece, and *Gabrielle* (1849), for which he was awarded the Montyon prize for virtue. The latter play called forth cries of admiration for the author from the spectators in the words of the play: "O père de famille! O poète! je t'aime!"

Augier became famous when he was but twenty-four years of age; his play, *La Ciguë* (1844), unanimously rejected by the committee of the Théâtre-Français, was triumphantly produced at the Odéon. Singularly enough, its classic theme (like the subject of his *Joueur de flûte*, written at the same period, but not produced till 1850) comprehended the redemption of the courtesan by love. In 1855, when his dramatic development had become apparent, it was the false sentimentalism in which such a thesis may be enveloped that impelled him to counteract Dumas's *Dame aux Camélias* with his own vigorous and startling *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (1855). In this play (which contributed to his election to the French Academy) Augier relentlessly exposed the pretensions of the "demi-mondaines," who were attempting to force their way into respectable society. The *Dame aux Camélias* was in line with the tendency—made fashionable by Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, and Victor Hugo's *Marion Delorme*, and enduring for a century—to glorify the impure woman. Augier presented a far different, and a more convincing portrait in that of the adventuress who seeks to besmirch the honor of a noble family, and is shot down by the protector of that honor.

Three of Augier's plays are accounted classics: *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* (1854), one of the most delightfully and naturally sketched pictures of contrasting social ranks—the ambitious bourgeois and the ruined aristocrat—and which still holds a first place on the roster of the Théâtre-Français; *L'Aventurière* (1848), a comedy in verse; and *Le Fils de Giboyer* (1862). The latter play is a sequel to *Les Effrontés* (1861), both plays being directed against corruptible journalists. In *Le Fils de Giboyer*, Augier rose to his full height as a satirist in what was regarded as an attack on the clerical party,

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and in which he unhappily slandered the ultramontane journalist Louis Veuillot, who answered him in a strong pamphlet, *Le Fonds de Giboyer*. According to Jules Lemaître, *les Effrontés* is the "most powerful, the liveliest and soundest of Augier's comedies. . . . The uprightness of mind and of heart, the generous honesty which is, as one generally admits, the soul of Augier's entire dramaturgy, is particularly apparent in this beautiful, satirical comedy."

Among Augier's other plays written wholly by himself or in collaboration, are *Les Lionnes pauvres* (1858), with its lesson to pleasure-mad, faithless wives; *Un Beau Mariage* (1859); *La Contagion* (1866), in the personality of whose adventurous hero, society thought to recognize the Duc de Morny. Augier's four-act comedy, *Madame Caverlet* (1875), is a masterpiece and a strong defense in favor of divorce. *Jean de Thommeray* (1873), with its touching scene of a prodigal son's enlistment in the ranks of his Breton countrymen marching to the defense of Paris, is taken from a novel by Jules Sandeau. *Les Fourchambault* (1878) had an immense success; it is concerned with the problem of the rights of illegitimate children. After *Les Fourchambault*, Augier ceased to write for the stage, feeling that he had put forth the best that was in him. Augier never made his art his trade, but he had enjoyed a career of uninterrupted success for forty years. His first play had been a revelation, writes Pailleron, his last, a triumph, and this victor did not even cease conquering when he had stopped writing, for his repertory never lost its popularity. Viewed after a lapse of over thirty years, not one of his best plays has gone out of favor. Of his twenty-seven plays, nine are written in verse, and these nine include at least two of his best dramas; yet it was dramatically effective verse rather than great poetry. His prose—better suited to plays with modern themes—is both lively and powerful, and is the vehicle for his clear and vigorous thought.

Augier never posed as a reformer nor as an apostle; he never preached nor pleaded, but kept in view the good sound moral sense of the people. The strength of a play, he himself said, consists in being the resounding echo of the whisperings of society, in formulating general sentiments which are still vague, and in directing the confused observation of the

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majority. Of the three or four masters of the stage, notes Jean Fleury, Augier was the most human, the finest poised, and the one who kept himself best in hand.

To go back a little: the most popular playwright of the nineteenth century in France was one who did not bother himself about social problems, or search for the secret springs of human action, but simply strove to entertain. Augustin Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) was a success in the most complete commercial sense of the word. He possessed in a super-normal degree the faculty of knowing exactly what would please the multitude, together with an amazing facility for supplying it, and a fertility of production that is almost incredible. Were he living to-day as an American playwright, he would be in himself a syndicate, and a rival in wealth to our most industrious millionaires. It is said that the self-contained actor-manager can "count the house" during the progress of a play without losing his cue—Scribe had the prophetic vision, and foresaw, as he wrote, the exact relation between the box-office returns and the lines or situations that he was at that moment contriving. It was not that he was wholly mercenary, for no man greedy for money would so generously have shared it with his numerous collaborators, to some of whom he was indebted only for the merest suggestions, and to whom he gave freely both the profits and the credit of authorship. The truth is, perhaps, that he could not help being superficial; he lacked the inspiration and the perception of genius, and he made the most of the talents he possessed. These included supreme skill in the construction of a play, and the gift of entertaining an audience without making it think. He preached no false morality, and did not sin against good taste; his virtuous characters were very, very good, and his vicious ones never really "horrid." People did not sleep during his plays; but they slept very well afterwards.

The consequence is that Scribe has proved to be as perishable as he was popular. Few of his plays are performed, or even remembered to-day. We say few because the pieces to his credit number, according to various estimates, from three hundred and fifty to five hundred, whereas the titles of the more important do not occupy much space in the printing.

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They include *Le Mariage d'Argent* (1827); *Bertrand et Raton* (1833); *La Camaraderie* (1837); *Le Verre d'Eau* (1840); *Une Chaîne* (1841); *Les Contes de la Reine de Navarre* (1850); *Bataille de Dames* (1851); *Les Doigts de Fée* (1858); and *Adrienne Lecouvreur* (1849), which is concerned with the love of Maurice de Saxe for the famous "tragédienne" who gives the play its name. The four plays last named were written in collaboration with Ernest Legouvé;¹ some of those enumerated had their first production at the Comédie-Française.

Scribe's later work is his best; but as early as 1836 the French Academy had opened its doors to this prosperous son of a silk merchant, who for a matter of forty years was the foremost playwright of France.² His astonishing variety knew no bounds. As a librettist his words are still sung in such operas as Auber's *Fra Diavolo*; Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, and *L'Africaine*; Donizetti's *La Favorite*, and in other musical works less familiar in the current repertory. He composed farces, melodramas, comedies, without number; he essayed the historical drama. He wrote a dozen plays before his first success, *Une Nuit de la Garde Nationale*—a one-act sketch or vaudeville—produced in 1816. Thereupon he devoted himself chiefly to the elaboration of vaudeville, to which he gave substance and dramatic form. In the ten years of his exclusive connection with the Gymnase theater, he contributed some one hundred and fifty plays, most of which were vaudevilles, or what we would call farce comedies. A signal example of his skill was *Valérie* (1822), a one-act vaudeville which, with little change, he divided into three acts, and, presto! behold a comedy for the Théâtre-Français. That there was repetition of character and situation in such a copious output it would seem to go without saying; yet his art resembled a kaleidoscope, in which the same bits of colored glass take on innumerable variations in design.

¹ Ernest Legouvé, an Academician, wrote the tragedy *Médée* for the great actress, Rachel.

² Scribe's imposing Château de Séricourt bears the following original inscription:

"Le Théâtre a payé cet asile champêtre;
Vous qui passez, merci! je vous le dois peut-être."

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Meanwhile, tragedy for a moment lifted its head, and there was promise of a compromise between Romanticism run mad and the classicism it had dethroned. François Ponsard (1814-67), after attempting a translation of Byron's "Manfred," produced in *Lucrèce* (1843) a tragic drama which won the applause of the critics, but in which the fire of genius was presently discerned to be only a flicker. His *Agnès de Méranie* (1847) and *Charlotte Corday* (1850) likewise burned with an intermittent flame; for all Musset's amiable tribute to Ponsard's poetry, the torch had not been passed on from Corneille. It was the expiring cry of tragedy. In France, as elsewhere, the modern has sought a less exalted form of expression; when the Théâtre-Français feels impelled to invoke the tragic muse, it must fall back on the seventeenth-century classics, or trust to a Bernhardt to vitalize the antiquated plays of Hugo. Ponsard had been hailed as the founder of the "school of common sense"; but though he fared somewhat better with his comedies, *L'Honneur et l'Argent* (1853); *La Bourse* (1856), *Le Lion amoureux* (1866), an historical study of the morals of the Directoire—effective by virtue of vivacious and powerful dialogue—he is an interesting memory rather than a living tradition. It must not be forgotten, however, that Joseph Autran was made an Academician because of his tragedy, *La Fille d'Eschyle* (1848). In the poetic drama, Henri de Bornier (1825-1901) met with a great immediate success that has by no means endured. Beauty of language and loftiness of conception have not sufficed as preservatives of *La Fille de Roland* (1875), in which history was grotesquely distorted. Its popularity is in part accounted for by its political allusions. De Bornier's *Les Noces d'Attila* (1880) was received with less enthusiasm; dramatic poetry cast in the old classic molds, without the divine spark of genius could not move a modern audience even when served with political sauce. Of Jean Richepin's (1849-) several plays in verse, *Le Chemineau* (1897) has attained more than a fleeting popularity. The poetic play has in recent years experienced a kind of revival in France, and, curiously enough, seems to be on even terms with the essays of the naturalistic school. The evidence of this taste has been emphatically shown in the case of M. Rostand, as we shall presently see.

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Melodrama, from time to time, has had its vogue in France. Ere the Romantic movement was precipitated by Hugo, Pixérécourt pleased the populace with a number of plays quite outside the pale of literature. Then came Bouchardy, who in *Lazare le Pâtre* and other prose dramas borrowed something of the plumage worn by the greater Romanticists. Dennery, who appeared on the scene about the middle of the century, possessed something of Scribe's constructive skill. His melodramas have a wonderful vitality; two of them—*Don César de Bazan* (1844), and *Les deux Orphelines* (1875) (The Two Orphans)—have been popular exhibits on the American stage in comparatively recent years.

Octave Feuillet (1821-90), who lent a hand in the fiction factory of the elder Alexandre Dumas, is best known to Americans through the translation of his popular tale, *Le roman d'un jeune homme pauvre*, and the play, *A Parisian Romance*, to which the late Richard Mansfield gave a long lease of theatrical life by emphasizing the character of Baron Chevril. Feuillet's reputation rests on much more important work—on such novels as *M. de Camors* (1867), and *Julia de Trécoeur* (1872), which disclosed an agreeable sentiment and style, and on his comedies in the manner of Musset.

The comedy of the mid-century was enlivened by the frequent contributions of Delphine Gay (Madame de Girardin), the beautiful and brilliant wife of Émile de Girardin. At least one of her plays—which include *Lady Tartuffe* (1853), and *La Joie fait Peur* (1854)—seemed to possess a value that would endure. The titular character of *Lady Tartuffe* disclosed an uncommon creative power, and Madame de Girardin's humor is still applauded by the fastidious; but posterity has proved to be ungallant and neglectful of her fame.

Eugène Labiche (1815-88), the most distinguished provider of the broad farce with a literary flavor, had entertained his audiences for many years before Augier discovered in him "the Grand Master of Laughter." A collected edition of his plays was issued in 1897, and the following year the French Academy elected him an Immortal. There cannot be much difference of opinion as to the literary merits of Labiche, but everybody likes him because of his inexhaustible and infectious humor coupled with wholesome common sense.

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It is generally granted that his vaudeville was a great advance over that of Scribe, and that no one since Molière in his most frivolous mood had caused such tempests of laughter. Labiche made his first success, in 1851, with *Le Chapeau de Paille d'Italie*; one of the funniest and best known of his innumerable plays is *Le Voyage de M. Perrichon*.

A contemporary writer of farces was Edmond Gondinet (1828-88), who lacked Labiche's powers of creation, but whose name is still associated with the gayety of the French theater in the nineteenth century. The laughable *Gavant, Minard et Cie*, was especially characteristic.

Édouard Pailleron (1834-99), the biographer of Augier and a poet as well as a playwright, occupies a higher place. It is not, alas! in America alone that the public turns a deaf ear to true merit; in Paris also one sometimes hears the applause of the groundlings prevail. So Pailleron, during a period of twenty years wrote some delightful plays that met with indifferent success. But in 1881 (the year of his election to the Academy) his reputation was made secure with the performance of *Le monde où l'on s'ennuie*, a comedy of exquisite construction, brilliant wit, and telling satire.

For the twenty years from 1860 to 1881, Ludovic Halévy (1834-1908), and Henri Meilhac (1832-97), supplied the French stage with some of its most joyful entertainment in the form of operettas, farces, and comedies. In 1858 Halévy had already made a reputation as one of the collaborators in the libretto for Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*. In the first ten years of the partnership with Meilhac, they jointly concocted the Offenbach librettos for *La Belle Hélène*, *Barbe Bleue*, *La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein*, and *La Périchole*, in which, under cover of satirizing social sins and follies, they displayed an aptitude for wit that bordered on indecency. Both writers were Parisians to the core, and their gifts of humor, fancy, and imagination, found congenial expression in airy sketches such as *Madame attend Monsieur*, *Toto chez Tata*, *La Boule*. Their one great success in attempting a more serious manner was *Frou-Frou*; in the hands of the actress, Aimée Desclée, it made a great sensation, nor has it yet lost its vogue. They were also the joint contributors of the libretto for Bizet's opera, *Carmen*. Upon the expiration

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of the partnership with Meilhac, Halévy displayed his original gifts in two remarkable stories of the Parisian lower middle class. The Cardinal family, in *Monsieur et Madame Cardinal*, and *Les Petites Cardinal*, have become by-words for a well-recognized type. Halévy's bid for an orthodox reputation was *L'Abbé Constantin* (1882), a kind of French "Vicar of Wakefield" in which some persons profess to see a classic, but which is in reality merely a wholesome story, prettily written. As one of the French novels which may safely be recommended to the "young lady" for whom Dumas *fil*s disdained to write, it has obtained a wide circulation in our own country. Halévy was made, in consequence of this short novel, a member of the French Academy in 1888.

If Émile Zola's critical endeavors to stir the dramatic pool were lacking in any considerable accomplishment, his personal attempts to storm the stage were even less effectual. Of the dramatizations of his novels only *Thérèse Raquin* need be noted here. As John Addington Symonds pointed out long ago, Zola in his novels was a romanticist, masquerading as a realist; and so in *Thérèse Raquin* he betrayed himself as a genius whose power was employed in fashioning a repulsive melodrama constructed on the outworn traditions.

Henri Becque (1837-99), was a realist who commanded the technical resources of the stage, and left his impress on the younger generation. Disdaining claptrap, and never obtruding his opinions in the puppets he infuses with life, his plays are vital with truth and human nature. His pessimism precluded popularity; yet it is the sort of pessimism we find interwoven in the tales of the great English novelist, Thomas Hardy—a pessimism which consists in regarding men and women as the ironical sport of Destiny, and is not forced to fit the theories, ideals, or arguments of the playwright or fictionist. Becque looked to life rather than to the formulas which the dramatists of his day were frantically seeking; and his method derives less from naturalism than from Molière and the ancient classical writers. He was a long time getting a hearing, and he persisted in the face of many defeats. *L'Enfant Prodigue*, a vaudeville first performed in 1868, is replete with wit and clever characterization. *L'Enlèvement* (1898), a problem play, paved the way for

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Les Corbeaux, performed at the Comédie-Française in 1882, and *La Parisienne* (1885). Of these two comedies, the first named is concerned with an impoverished family of women who fall a prey to human vultures; the portraiture is admirable, and it is a model of realism at its best. Neither this play nor *La Parisienne*—which presents the domestic “triangle” without rhetoric or sentimental gloss—was a popular success. Becque was too gloomy and too outspoken for the Parisians. But time, which adjusts these matters, has decided that both plays are of permanent value.

The influence of the Théâtre Libre, founded in 1887 by Antoine, is variously estimated. M. Antoine, together with the young playwrights of the new school who rallied around him, sought to put naked realism on the stage, and to develop a naturalistic drama free from conventional device and restraint. The first performance took place in a passageway, near Montmartre, known as the Élysée des Beaux-Arts. It may be interjected that this apostle of realism was hospitable, in the beginning, to plays of other and diverse kinds.¹ It was a “free stage”—independent of the censor because it was a private enterprise, supported by subscribers; and so a complete test of the new dramatic movement could be made. This test seems to have been both a success and a failure. Antoine's admirers remind us that most of the celebrated playwrights and actors of the last twenty years served their apprenticeship in his theater, and that many of the German cities have successfully emulated his example. Gustave Lanson recognizes that Antoine has taught his audiences the sense of real dramatic imitation. Other critics say that the experiment did not proclaim the triumph of realism, that on the contrary, the enthusiasts of the Théâtre Libre pushed their theories to an extreme: the representatives of the “comédie rose”—Becque, Ancey, Courteline, Jullien, Méténier and others—endeavored to dramatize demoralizing human types

¹ Among these plays were *La Reine Fiammetta*, by Catulle Mendès; *Le Baiser*, a fairy play in verse by Th. de Banville; *Une Évasion*, by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam; *L'Ornement des noces spirituelles de Rysbroeck l'Admirable*, of Maeterlinck; *La mort du duc d'Enghien*, by Hennique, and *La Patrie en danger*, by the brothers Goncourt.

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offensive to public taste; the performances of the free stage became gross and repulsive, and, after eight years of an experiment that attracted wide attention, M. Antoine abandoned it for a time. After an interval, he resumed the experiment with considerable modifications, at the playhouse which since 1897 has been known as the Théâtre Antoine, which some persons regard as the most interesting theater in Paris.¹

Many of the plays produced at the Théâtre Libre (where the number of performances of any one piece was rigidly restricted) found a welcome elsewhere, and some of the contributors to its stage were men of an original and striking talent. François de Curel reverted rather than returned to nature when in *La fille sauvage* (1902), he placed on the stage the erstwhile human mate of an orang-outang; but he gained critical approval for his analysis of emotion and his dramatic strength in *L'Envers d'une Sainte* and *Les Fossiles*. Eugène Brieux has come to be accepted as a satirist of a certain sort; universal suffrage, charity, and law, are respectively the targets in *L'Engrenage*, *Les Bienfaiteurs*, and *La Robe Rouge*. He has even shot his bolt (in *Les Remplaçantes*) at the practice of substituting a wet nurse for the mother. George Courteline and George Ancy, in *Boubouroche* and *La Dupe* were contrivers of a humor styled the "comique cruel." It was Courteline who, with his one-act plays, *La Paix du ménage* and *Un Client sérieux*, gave the impulse to the small theaters now so numerous in Paris.

The Théâtre Libre introduced to Parisians the plays of Ibsen,² Björnson, Tolstoy, Hauptmann, and Sudermann. Ibsen's craftsmanship was quickly recognized and applauded by

¹ It was in the preceding year, 1896, that M. Antoine undertook to exploit the social drama (in which M. Leblond perceived the redemption of dramatic literature), producing *La Guerre au village*, by Trarieux, and other plays of this nature.

² *Peer Gynt* was produced at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre, in 1896, by a company under the direction of the actor-manager M. Lugné-Poé, who had previously given performances in London of other plays by Ibsen, notably *Rosmersholm*. *Le Canard Sauvage* (The Wild Duck) was put on at the Théâtre Libre as early as 1891, but it is only lately that it has been performed at the Odéon.

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French playgoers, though his philosophy and mysticism perplex and baffle them. In what measure these currents from the north will ultimately affect the stream of French dramatic production no man may say; they have at least exercised some immediate influence in modifying the native inclination to rhetoric and purely theatrical effects. Paris anticipated London in welcoming Ibsen; and M. Augustin Filon notes with emphasis that, following upon the unfavorable attitude of Sarcey and Jules Lemaître, "John Gabriel Borchmann" has been warmly applauded in the *Journal des Débats* by Émile Faguet, and that the Ibsen influence can clearly be traced in such dramatists as Paul Hervieu and de Curel. M. Filon also perceives in a little group of playwrights of whom Hervieu is the most important, an intellectual and moral stimulation derived through observation of the Théâtre Libre experiments. Of this group, Henri Lavedan¹ has shown proficiency in light comedy; George de Porto-Riche has revealed in *Amoureuse* an unsuspected talent; Maurice Donnay,² in *Amants*, rather more than in his other plays, has displayed originality and charm in the treatment of an old theme. Paul Hervieu (born 1857) has established himself as one of the foremost living playwrights of France, and has written two notable novels—*Flirt* and *L'Armature*. *Les Tenaïlles* ("The Nippers"), a grim and terrible drama of marital unhappiness endured for the sake of the wife's illegitimate child, afforded a hint of Hervieu's power. A later play, *Le Dédale* (1903), in which the child again dominates the theme of domestic misery, revealed a climax bordering dangerously on the melodramatic, but was nevertheless filled with a sincerity and animated by an art that entitle it to rank among the most significant dramatic contributions of recent years. Hervieu's treatment of the problem play differs from that of Dumas fils, inasmuch as he does not thrust the moral

¹ The first of the Antoine playwrights to win success in the regular theaters, his great triumph was *Le Duel*, performed at the Théâtre-Français. Of his *Nouveau Jeu*, which gained him admission to the French Academy, a Paris critic said that it was "décolleté jusqu' à la ceinture."

² *La Patronne* is the latest of Donnay's plays and *La Clairière* the joint production of Donnay and Descaves.

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down your throat, and maintains the attitude of an observer rather than a preacher. On the whole, he suggests Becque rather than Ibsen. He has not, however, escaped the imputation of that wordiness which disfigured some of the plays by Dumas *fils*. This appears in *Les Paroles Restent*, *La Loi de l'Homme*, and in that singular puzzle play which has least contributed to M. Hervieu's artistic reputation—*L'Énigme*. "In their revolt against the so-called 'well-made play,'" remarks Mr. James Huneker, "the newer Parisian dramatists have gone to the other extreme." René Doumic writes: "the theater is becoming the vehicle of social predication: every time an author is inspired with the muse of Thalia, he finds it necessary to evolve a social question: the reform of the family, education, marriage, divorce, magistrature, army, finances, penal methods, intelligence offices for nurses, what not. If our society is not redeemed it is not for the want of having exposed before the footlights a hundred different expedients. . . . The object of the stage is not to preach nor to create laughter, it is to portray in verity the customs of average society."

Maurice Maeterlinck, poet, essayist, playwright, was born in Belgium (1862), and did not go to live in Paris until 1886; but he is properly classed among French writers. His earlier plays—vague, formless, mystic—were written to be performed by marionettes; to minds unreceptive to mysticism they remain incomprehensible. His first drama, *La Princesse Maleine* (1889), is a jumble of ideas and words, scarcely more coherent than his early volume of poems, *Serres Chaudes*; more than ten years of evolution and dramatic symbolism separate it from the lucid and impressive *Monna Vanna* (1902), written for Madame Maeterlinck.¹ It may be said of this play—of almost unrivaled popularity in Europe, and not unfamiliar to the American public—that the chief obstacle to its successful performance in English is the difficulty of assembling a company of actors adequate to the delivery of its poetry and the interpretation of its heroical-

¹ Madame Georgette Leblanc, the famous actress. The play has lately been set to music for an opera by the composer Henry Février.

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ly wrought characters. Maeterlinck's other plays include *L'Intruse* (1890); *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892), beautiful but bizarre in sentiment; *Sœur Beatrice* (1901); and *Joyzelle* (1903), a love story in which the playwright has returned in some measure to his earlier manner. Maeterlinck expressly eschews action in the plays other than *Monna Vanna*; "théâtre statique" (as opposed to the dynamic) is the term he himself applies to them. He is "rather a philosopher who has turned dramatist than a dramatist who has turned philosopher," says Arthur Symons; he "has made the stage at once more subjective and more pictorial than it ever was before." A word of digression concerning the essays: Maeterlinck has described his philosophy of life and his literary theories in his three works *Le Trésor des Humbles*, *La Sagesse et la Destinée*, and *Le Temple enseveli*. Theater goers who turn away bewildered from the dream plays, readers to whom mysticism is meaningless, may nevertheless find enchantment in the delightful, perspicuous pages of his greatest production, *La vie des abeilles*—a "life of the bee" that discloses a poet and thinker equipped with the magic of a seductive literary style.

Ten years have passed since M. Faguet, speaking for criticism, found himself in accord with popular taste in pronouncing *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), the finest dramatic poem in fifty years. Edmond Rostand, its author, born in 1868, was, because of it, acclaimed a genius, and four years later—following *L'Aiglon*—he was elected a member of the French Academy. In ten years, however, enthusiasm cools, and of late there has been a disposition to view M. Rostand's work more critically, especially as in *L'Aiglon* (1900)—with its interminable recitations and its curious historical perversities—he did not sustain the expectations aroused by his earlier play. *Cyrano de Bergerac* is not perhaps an epoch-making drama. It has not signalized a new movement to those who stand anxiously alert for a sign in the dramatic heavens; analysis of its ethical value has found it wanting in the elements that go to make a great play. Yet its captivating qualities are undeniable. It is rife with capricious fancy and imagination, and blends pure joy with passages of engaging sentiment and telling pathos. Its verse is verse, not the

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poetry of great poets, but of its kind it is not excelled in grace and buoyancy, and it has this especial merit—that it is theatrically effective, with none of the monotony peculiar to the traditional Alexandrine. Indeed, it is quite possible that M. Faguet might reaffirm his first impression. M. Rostand, who always has been a semi-invalid, produces little. His plays antedating his masterpiece embrace *Les Romanesques*, *La Princesse Loïtaine*, and *La Samaritaine*, and display talent, but do not reveal the author of *Cyrano* save as a poet of great facility.

Probably no play has been so much talked or written about before its production as *Chanticleer*. Its long-delayed appearance called forth many satirical comments from the anti-Rostandites: “Whatever the beauty of the work may be,” wrote Henri Mairet, “it is impossible that when it is known, it will bring nearly so much renown to its author as it did while it was unknown. The author therefore has every reason to keep it as long as possible in a concealment so conducive to its glory.” However this may be, Rostand, according to the French dramatist de Caillavet, has attained in *Chanticleer* lyric effects as good as in the best of his former works, and some poetic flights, but no dramatic qualities. The subject of the play was suggested by the Fowl Congresses popular in the literature of the Middle Ages. The title *Chanticleer*, is Rostand’s adaptation of the old French spelling of Chantecler. The play is in four acts with a prologue in verse, which is delivered by one of the actors, who steps before the curtain and announces that it is a play of animals. The chief character is the Cock (*Chanticleer*), who takes the commanding position as herald of the dawn, and even more than that, for he impresses his brother fowls to such an extent that they believe him to actually command the dawn which appears at his summons.

There is a love motive very delicately managed. In fact, the finest quality of the play—on the authority of those who have heard passages recited—is the lyrical delicacy of handling, which has prevented a play of animals from being ridiculous. The heroine is, of course, a hen, and in a more naïve time, the Norman-French “Parliament of Fowls” was received with complete seriousness; but the times have changed,

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and the incongruity of cocks, hens and dogs speaking modern French pentameters is only too easily perceived as an element of humor. So far as the reading of the play is concerned this incongruity no longer strikes the persons most concerned, the actors—for there is no doubt about their cordial enthusiasm on the subject of the charm of *Chanticleer*.

It was long evident from certain indications in the plays and from private utterances of Rostand that he intended to go back farther in the atmosphere of the drama than the time of Richelieu. It is surmised by some of his friends that he repented of *l'Aiglon* as too modern, and as a French dramatic writer recently said, the author who could impose the impossibility of *Cyrano* on the audience, and make a gallant compose a complicated ballade in the act of the exquisite feints of an accomplished master of the fence, could easily go farther and make lyrical addresses to the sun and to all the powers of earth and heaven coming from the mouths of fowls, appear probable.

Chanticleer is an appeal to that latent romance and *naïveté* in the minds of the most sophisticated, which make the dreams of Maeterlinck and Rostand's own *Princesse Loïtaine* agreeable in this over-analytical age. Brunetière, speaking of such poetry as Rostand writes, says that his province was to take us out of ourselves and into new, unknown, and ever-impossible worlds. In *Cyrano*, while following the form of drama in vogue among the *Précieuses* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet and reviving their spirit, Rostand captivated his analytical Parisian with an impossible world, and in *Chanticleer* he revives the atmosphere of the dramatic fable, which his ancestors in France, and his ancestors in Norman England, looked on as one of the most important forms of the play, and threw themselves heartily into its motives and atmosphere. The play as read, evidently restores this atmosphere, and forces the hearers to be of it. The question as to whether the play-acting can produce so complete an illusion, cannot be solved until the actors speak their parts and attempt to simulate an entirely unreal life under very real conditions.

The passion for playgoing in France has created a health-

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ful appetite for performances out of doors. Theaters in the open air have been established by M. Jules Rateau at Périgueux, and Limoges; in the mountains at Cauterets; and at Biarritz, where the tragedy, *Phèdre*, performed in the summer of 1907, enjoyed a stage setting of great natural beauty at the Théâtre de la Mer. M. Albert Darmont has organized the Théâtre Antique de la Nature at Champigny-la-Bataille, and produced the tragedy by Paul Souchon, *Le nouveau Dieu*. Souchon, who has met with some success in the performance of *Phyllis*, in verse, announces his desire to create a modern tragedy;¹ and Joachim Gasquet, in his prologue to his antique tragedy, *Dionysos*, affirms his intention to renew the cult of the philosophical and religious drama.

The Théâtre des Poètes, organized by Maurice Magre and his followers, and devoted almost exclusively to the romantic drama, has not proved an unqualified success; but it has served the purpose of introducing to the public certain playwrights of progressive tendencies. The plays produced under these auspices include *L'Or*, by Magre; *Imperia*, by Jean Valmy-Boysse; *La Peur d'aimer*, by G. Frejaville; and *Louis XVII*, by G. Frauchois.

This roster of modern French playwrights is far from complete. To make it fairly so one must include the names of François Coppée, Jules Claretie, A. Parodi, E. Bergerat, P. Déroulède, J. Aicard, G. Ohnet, A. Bisson,² Jules Lemaitre, J. Jullien, A. Capus,³ L. Gandillot, G. Feydeau, Mirbeau, Rivoire,⁴ Bernstein,⁵ Bourget, Cury,⁶ and others. These, with varying degrees of merit, and representing many

¹ A new tragedy, *La Furie*, by Jules Bois, was lately produced at the Théâtre-Français.

² The vaudevillist whose latest play, *La Femme*, is considered a superior melodrama.

³ *L'Oiseau blessé*, the most recent of Capus's comedies.

⁴ *Le bon Roi Dagobert*.

⁵ *La Rafale*, *Samson*, *Le Voleur*, and *Israël*, some of Bernstein's recent plays.

⁶ The joint production of Bourget and Cury, *Le Divorce*, a vehicle for the expression of four theories—orthodox catholic, free love, liberal thought, and toleration—which find eloquent apologists in the various characters, caters to all tastes.

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streams of tendency, are all enrolled in the *Quarante ans de théâtre* of the late Francisque Sarcey. The list might easily be amplified by enumerating the authors of certain fairy plays—including Richepin, Lorrein, Bouchor; the authors of the drama *injouable*—unadapted to the frivolous public taste; together with the playwrights who, in varying degree and of various schools, are successfully contributing to the drama of the day. But their place at present is a subject for current criticism rather than for the pages of a book.

Whether or not the drama may be regarded as the highest form of literary expression, it certainly seems to be the most difficult, and—in its successful exercise of truly great creative gifts—the rarest. The disproportion between the dramatic productions of English genius and the contemporary development and output in other branches of literature is especially noticeable in the nineteenth century, so rich in poetry, fiction, and scientific works. This disproportion—in an indeterminate degree—exists also in France: the French poets and novelists of that century outweigh the contents of the dramatic scale. There is nothing, for example, in the plays of this period made of such enduring stuff as the tales of Balzac and the poetry of Hugo and Musset. Excepting transcendent genius—and even transcendent genius is not wholly free from the reproach—there seems to be something in the practical and contemporary requirements and, we may add, the temptations, of the stage, that pales the divine fire, clips the wings of inspiration, and cheapens the art of the imaginant. Can this be so, or is it merely an inexplicable whim of nature which gives us not so often as once in a century, a man who unites technical dramatic proficiency with the largest gifts of literary expression?

It is only within the last fifteen years that the German and Scandinavian drama has to some extent affected the prestige so long enjoyed by the French plays in the theaters of Europe and the United States. This has a special significance in view of the decline in literary value noted by some of the Paris critics, who declare that in this respect the French stage is deteriorating. Two expressions invented by the playwrights themselves may perhaps be taken as implying their recognition of the situation: “*Ce n'est pas du théâtre*” is said of

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a play possessing literary and dramatic merit, but lacking qualities that would make it "take" with the public; whereas the affirmative, "*c'est du théâtre*" is employed to designate a piece obviously destined to success because of its vulgar gayety, questionable moral, and its appeal to the popular emotions. Not "will it play?" but rather, "will it pay?" is the uppermost issue of the hour. It is customary to blame the public for the degeneracy of the stage, the authors being obliged to cater to its taste. "Convenient excuse!" exclaims Doumic, "the public has never prescribed any form of art, it takes what is given; it is docile and needs to be guided. It has that need more than ever for it is growing larger."

The future of the drama in France is not foreshadowed by contemporary productions: no supreme master points the way, and no considerable body of dramatists has developed a set tendency. Only this we know: that a century has passed rich and varied in achievement, without supplying one great and enduring addition to the dramatic literature of the world. This statement holds true of all other nations with the difference that their dramatic output has been smaller and poorer than that of the French.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE FRENCH PRESS

THE ORIGIN OF NEWSPAPERS

WHEN we remember that the Chinese had developed a literature at a time when our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, in a barbaric state, were painting their skins blue, it does not seem astonishing that the Chinese also had originated the art of printing as early as the sixth century of the Christian era, and that the *Peking Gazette*—the oldest daily newspaper in the world—dates from about 1340 A.D. This journal, still in existence as an official organ, is printed from wooden types, just as it was in the fourteenth century, and on one side of the paper only, with a colored cover. Strictly speaking, however, it affords no real connecting link between modern typography and journalism. The newspaper is the product of modern civilization, and was not called into being until long after the discovery of the New World had opened untrodden avenues of trade and quickened the activities of men. The first newspaper, in the actual sense of the term, was the weekly *Frankfurter Journal*, established by Egenolph Emmel in 1615; and the example set by Germany was soon followed in England, in 1622, by Nathaniel Butler and his associates, in the founding of the *Weekly News*; while in France journalism began with the *Gazette* (1631). Journalism did not become a power till much later, when it undertook to inform and direct public opinion through the medium of the “leading article” or political “editorial.” This had its beginnings in England early in the eighteenth century, in the stirring times of Swift and Defoe; but France did not invoke its aid till the Revolution of 1789—Germany following ten years later.

The progenitor of the newspaper was the letter of the six-

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teenth century, and it is not without profit to note its influence in preparing the way for the Press. It is true that the Roman Empire had produced in its bulletins a sort of incipient journalism. The *Acta Diurna*, recording the achievements of the army; the *Acta Senatus*, a sort of Parliamentary report incorporated in the Government Gazette by Julius Cæsar; and the *Acta Publica*, which, under the Imperial sanction, embraced a variety of statistical, economical and financial reports, together with certain matters of public importance: these, indeed, savored of a newspaper. We may even see a certain analogy between our modern newspaper bulletins, scanned by the eager crowd, and the huge affairs set up by Cæsar in public places, about 59 B.C. But the time was not ripe for the continuous development of such an idea. It must needs wait not only for Gutenberg's discovery of metal types, but for the production of paper in sufficient quantity and of sufficient cheapness. So not till the Renaissance was the means of communication between persons distantly separated accomplished through any better medium than the letter.

After the discovery of America the need of news and of means for its dissemination became insistent, particularly among men of business. The fashion grew of writing letters which were in part of a personal nature and in part a brief chronicle of important events occurring within the writer's vicinity. The letters had obviously a great value and interest. "Scraps" or "supplements," "nova" or "avise," as they were called in the various countries of their origin and transmission, these precious chronicles of war and trade were so passed from hand to hand for perusal that it is a wonder any of them remain to the antiquarian.

It came to pass that in Venice—a news center for Europe—the *Fogli di Avvisi*, or news leaflets, took the form of a small daily sheet put forth on the Rialto for the price of a gazzetta—a small coin equivalent to a little more than a cent of our own money. Then leaflet and coin became interchangeable terms, and to this day in Italy the newspaper is a "gazzetta."¹

¹ At a later period, in England, toward the close of the seventeenth century, news leaflets made up from the news of the coffee-houses were

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At Augsburg the Fugger family of merchant princes, whose commercial connections kept them in touch with travelers and traders everywhere, were constant contributors of news letters, some of which are still preserved in the Court Library at Vienna. Melanchthon, Luther's collaborator, was an indefatigable correspondent at Wittenberg. From his letters and from Luther's we learn that when some bit of news was of special interest, it was not infrequently printed on a loose sheet. Such a letter, bearing the date of 1505, and entitled "New Paper," has been preserved; but the designation is misleading if we seek to connect it with the modern newspaper.

The news letters emanating from Venice, Augsburg, Wittenberg, Nuremberg, Brussels, Antwerp, Frankfurt-on-the-Main, and Paris, were diversified in contents, and, considering their brevity, conveyed a surprising quantity of information. These quasi-reporters of the period had the "nose for news," and sometimes a taste for the sensational not unlike that of our contemporary newspaper makers addicted to "Extras" and adjectival debauches. They reveled in "bloody rains," murders, monstrosities, and mirages. They kept Christendom on edge with reports of the victories of the Turks, whose prowess at that time was a constant menace to Europe. Letter-writing had, in fact, become a trade, and many of the "avise" writers were regularly paid for their services. One such reporter in Cologne, who kept well informed concerning the Netherlands and France, received an annual salary of two hundred guilders from Rudolf II.

To write such letters was comparatively easy; their dispatch and transmission were attended by many difficulties. Princes, dignitaries of the church, the monasteries and the towns—all were pressed into service to supplement the efforts of the merchants' messengers. Then, in 1425, Fillippo Maria Visconti organized at Milan a chain of ducal relay stations. Maximilian, with the aid of the Italian, Ian de Sassis, es-

hawked about the streets; but penny journalism had no sooner showed its head than it perished under the imposition of a government tax of a half-penny per sheet.

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tablished a route that in 1491 connected Milan with Innsbruck; and later, under the management of Franz of Taxis, Innsbruck was linked with the Netherlands.

The Taxis family pushed their enterprise. A line of relay stations was extended to the French and Spanish courts; the system was put in operation throughout Germany. Gradually the service ceased to be monopolized for royal purposes. By 1510 it was available for private uses, and in 1595 Leonard of Taxis, was appointed Postmaster General of the Empire by Rudolf II. Thereafter, individual efforts to maintain delivery routes were abandoned, for the Taxis service had come into general use in Germany and throughout much of Southwestern Europe.

FRENCH JOURNALS

The tumultuous course of events in France during the past three centuries has been a decisive factor in shaping French journalism. Its evolution has not been as continuous as in America and England, and the circumstances attending its development, no less than the idiosyncrasies of the French character and temperament, have produced a press which, measured by Anglo-Saxon ideals and prejudices, has been limited in scope and achievement. For one thing, it is the nature of the French to manifest a greater interest in persons than in conditions and circumstances, and to feel a deeper concern in some distinguished author's opinions of a subject than in the subject itself. The greater the violence displayed by the several exponents of a theory or a cause—culminating, perhaps, in a duel—the greater is the joy derived therefrom by the French public. Moreover, journalists in France have been compelled by law to sign their productions, thereby placing the person of the writer in a position of peculiar eminence unattainable in England and America, where all political articles appear anonymously. Hence the person of the French journalist has enjoyed a significant distinction. It is not the journal for which he writes, not *L'Autorité*, or the *La Libre Parole*, but he himself, Paul de Cassagnac, or Édouard Drumont, who constitutes a political power; and therefore it is not unusual in France for a journalist to be

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called to political position, which in Germany or in Austria would be wholly out of the question. It is coming to be recognized, however, that such a state of affairs is against public policy. For, as certain critics have pointed out, the power of the press in France is exercised directly upon the Parliament rather than upon the people, so that it is possible under the prevailing system for journalistic adventurers to shape the course of Government without reference to real public opinion.

Perhaps the principal distinction between journalism in France and that in England and the United States has been the indifference of the French to what we call "news," which in American eyes, especially, is the first essential requisite. Until recently the Parisian has been content if his chosen journal provided him with political articles, and with that species of brilliant gossip, criticism, and comment in which the French excel—above all, with the beloved and inevitable *feuilleton*, or romance, without which no Parisian paper could go to press. What bread and the circus were to the Roman populace in the time of the Cæsars, so to the bourgeois and his betters have been the political outpourings of the pamphleteers, and the *feuilleton*, in its various expressions of the journalistic-literary art, from the time of the first Napoleon to the period of the Third Republic. But times change, and even in France men change with them. Traditions are being overturned with the rise of the democracy and the infusion of ideas from abroad. The faculties of imagination and fancy, so long enthroned in the intellectual temple of French life, are giving way before the new and strange worship of facts, and the common mind does not stop at demanding that telegraphic news from St. Petersburg shall actually be prepared at the Russian capital, and not in a boulevard café.

So passes the glory of French journalism. For the news instinct, once aroused, is insatiable and terrible—growing with what it feeds upon. "The news of last week under the date of to-morrow" is an old arraignment of the Parisian press that may presently seem obsolete enough. Even the good old tradition, that a dog fight in Paris is more important as news than a battle in America, is dying. The "new

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journalism," following the lead of the *Écho de Paris*, has its correspondents at the Continental capitals, as well as in London, and the political utterances of the most reckless journals are coming to conform in some measure to the actualities of the news. Even the *Intransigeant* is not all Rochefort since it has become an evening paper, with telegrams; and that column of fag ends, the *Dernière Heure* of the morning dailies, is in a fair way to be abolished.

The real beginning of French journalism is found in *La Gazette*, established in Paris May 30, 1631, by Théophraste Renaudot, physician to Louis XIII. It was a periodical newspaper written in manuscript, in imitation of the Italian news letters, and which Renaudot circulated among his patients. The aim of this journal was to espouse the interests of a monarchy hard pressed by the ambitious nobility of the Fronde; and Richelieu, if he did not actually inspire the project, at least became its patron. The great Cardinal, and, after him, Mazarin, lent it their active coöperation; Anne of Austria conferred upon its editor the honorary title "Historiographer of Her Majesty"; even Louis XIII himself contributed brief articles, and—like a child enjoying a new toy—sometimes took them in person to the printer and saw them set up in type.

Renaudot had many enemies to contend with, not alone among the French nobility, but among foreign princes as well. Nevertheless, *La Gazette*, consisting of eight pages in small quarto, grew from a weekly into a semi-weekly—ultimately into a daily. A page was reserved for advertisements, and once a month a supplement was issued. Goaded by his adversaries who sought to curtail the circulation of the journal, Renaudot, in a certain issue, published this defiance: "I hereby request all foreign princes and states to waste no more time in futile attempts to bar my chronicles from their territory. For mine is a ware whose sale it has never been possible to restrict, and it has this in common with large rivers—its strength grows with the barriers it encounters."

Renaudot prevailed in the end, and, dying in 1653, passed on the paper to his sons. In the political storms of ensuing years its name was changed more than once, but under the title adopted in 1762—*La Gazette de France*—it still endures to-day, the organ of that dwindling little band of Frenchmen

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who constitute the survivors of the old Legitimist party. The files of the paper, from the first number—more than three hundred volumes in all—have fortunately been preserved, and are an invaluable record of the times.

It is necessary to note but briefly some of the early contemporaries of *La Gazette*. These include Loret's rhymed *Gazette* (1650-65), containing crude but vivid pen pictures of the period; *Le Mercure Galant* (1672), afterwards *Le Nouveau Mercure*, which, still later, as *Le Mercure de France*, attained in 1790 a circulation of 13,000 copies, suspending publication in 1792, and thereafter alternately revived and suppressed till its final suspension in 1853; *Le Journal Étranger* (expired in 1763), numbering among its contributors Rousseau, Grimm and Prévost. The first French daily was *Le Journal de Paris*; born with the New Year of 1777, it had an innocuous career for half a century, ceasing to exist in 1825.

In 1789 Mirabeau's *Courrier de Provence* was the forerunner of a veritable rain of newspapers. With the overthrow of the old social régime and the "Proclamation concerning the Freedom of the Press," by the Powers of 1791, the highly charged atmosphere spent its thunder showers of journals. Marat's most violent *Ami du Peuple*, together with *L'Orateur du Peuple*, *Le Patriote Français*, *La Tribune du Peuple*, *Les Révolutions de Paris*, were among the countless ephemeral newspapers that embraced among their editors such leaders as Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, Prudhomme. It is estimated that some three hundred and fifty journals, including seventy-three political publications, were precipitated in Paris at this time. Nearly all these newspapers had expired by the fall of 1793; one lived till late in the nineteenth century; two—*Le Moniteur Universel*, and *Le Journal des Débats*—have survived to our own day.

With the passing of the Terror the reaction set in. "Let the French amuse themselves and dance," said Napoleon, "and let alone the plans of Government." We see him politely pointing out the frontier to Madame de Staël, and ungallantly retorting with an arrow from her own quiver when she complained that he had no respect for women: "Madame, art is sexless." It is said that Napoleon secretly

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feared and admired journalists, and even solicited their support. Nevertheless, during the Consulate sixty political papers were suppressed, and, of those remaining, thirty-nine disappeared during the Empire, so that in 1811 only four were left, not counting *La Gazette*, *Le Journal de Paris*, *Le Moniteur*, and *Le Journal des Débats*. These four papers were under strict censorship, a function officially reintroduced by the decree of February 5, 1810, but which had been practically in existence for some time before. Thus, at Napoleon's instigation, the press was degraded into the merest tool. Henceforth, politics were almost completely banished from the papers; reports on music, theaters, balls, festivals, constituted their principal contents.

After the fall of Napoleon, during the Restoration and the July Monarchy, the French press enjoyed a speedy renaissance. Almost all eminent personages, such as Thiers, Mignet, Chateaubriand, Rossi, Tocqueville, took a personal interest of some sort or other in journalism, and, in consequence, a newer and finer note was sounded in the newspapers. The most brilliant of these publications, which gloried in the display of a subtly academic character, was the *Le Journal des Débats*, founded in August, 1789, by the printer, Baudouin, and acquired a year later, for twenty thousand francs, by Louis Bertin, a literary man of means and good birth. It was a brilliant success from the beginning, and it has ever maintained that standard of literary excellence and political character and stamina which led Lamartine to say that it had "made itself part of French history." Even Napoleon, who tolerated rather than approved the *Débats*, did not work it serious injury when, finding the title "inconvenient," he caused it to be altered to *Le Journal de l'Empire* (the old name was resumed in 1815), or again, when, under the threat of a special censorship, he informed Fiévée, one of its editors, that the only safe course was "to avoid the publication of any news unfavorable to the Government, until the truth of it is so well established that the publication became needless." Later, with Sylvestre de Sacy as editor, a journalist whose exquisite diction was united with a dignity and reserve unimpaired in the most trying circumstances, the *Débats* was purged of all petty feuds and rivalries, and rose to a power

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that did not wane until the days of the Third Republic. Then came a political disruption of owners and readers, just as in 1815 a similar disagreement had led to the founding of *Le Constitutionnel*. Those who remained at the helm sought to regain the prestige enjoyed under Louis-Philippe by a recourse to popular methods. The policy of the paper was changed to the sensational, the price reduced, and an evening edition was brought out on pink paper. But these methods only succeeded in horrifying the old *clientèle* without alluring a new one. To-day the *Débats*, conservative Republican, of moderate circulation, sells for three cents to all who still enjoy a journal that adheres to the most delightful traditions of the French press. It is the newspaper in which Jules Janin brought the *feuilleton* to the highest pitch of perfection; in which Chateaubriand addressed "Unhappy France" and the *Malheureux Roi*; whose contributors have included Guizot and Heine, Renan, and Taine; in which the Baron Jacques de Reinach conducted a financial page of supreme integrity and authority—and, for the first time, a page intelligible to the public. It is the newspaper which, above all others, enrolled among its writers the mental aristocracy of France, so that de Sacy could say to the youthful Renan, "Believe me, whoever has once written for the *Débats* cannot remain away; it would be a misfortune for him."

Cheap journalism in France goes back to 1836, when Émile de Girardin founded *La Presse*, reducing the customary annual subscription price of eighty francs to half that sum. *Le Siècle* followed suit, and ten years later had become the most popular paper of the French lower middle classes, with a circulation of more than forty thousand; in the Paris of to-day it has lost its importance. The *Presse*, also, which in its early days was noted for its vivacity and brightness, and included Balzac, Gautier, Hugo, and Sophie Gay (Madame de Girardin, author of *La Joie Fait Peur*) among its contributors, has been overtaken by mediocrity. Within recent years it was conspicuous in Paris as an example of French "yellow" journalism; it is even said that our most flagrant American journal of this class borrowed its headlines from France—a damning indictment we are unable to confirm. The *Presse*, however, is doing penance for its sins, as it has

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lately been absorbed in the Roman Catholic newspaper syndicate conducted by M. Vrau in conjunction with *La Croix*.

The immense early popularity of *La Presse* and *Le Siècle* was attained in part through the publication in their *feuilletons* of novels by Alexandre Dumas, Eugène Sue and other distinguished authors. At the same time *Le Constitutionnel*, established early in the Restoration period, was revived under the direction of Dr. Véron, who paid Eugène Sue one hundred thousand francs ¹ for *Le Juif Errant*, reduced the price of the paper, and engaged Sainte-Beuve as literary critic. It is worthy of note that this amazing literary enterprise of three French journals, at a time when the aggregate of subscribers in Paris was but 70,000, was not imitated till late in the nineteenth century; and then not by individual newspapers, but by a syndicate of American journals which published novels of minor importance.

La Patrie appeared in 1842—a paper originally designed for the lesser bourgeoisie, and degenerating into a Chauvinistic agitator. The poet, François Coppée, and the Comtesse de Martel (Gyp), have helped to make it conspicuous. *Le National*, a journal founded in 1830 and now forgotten, was a great political power in its day, and helped to overthrow first the government of Charles X and afterwards the rule of Louis-Philippe. The revolution of February, 1848, like the first revolution, produced a great crop of new papers, some of them with names similar to those used in the '90s. In 1848 no less than four hundred and fifty new journals appeared, and in 1849 two hundred more were started; but an ordinance of the Second Empire, passed February 17, 1852, disposed of most of these petty brawlers, and abrogated the freedom of the press which the Second Republic had reinstated. In 1853 the number of Parisian daily papers had fallen to fourteen. Chief among these were: *Les Débats*, *Le Siècle*, *La Presse*, *Le Pays*, *La Patrie*, *Le Constitutionnel*, *L'Univers*, *La Gazette de France*, *Le Charivari*, *L'Assemblée Nationale*, *L'Union*. The identical conditions existing under Napoleon I were developed under Napoleon III, whose *coup d'état* killed *Le National* and other liberal or-

¹ Scribe received six thousand francs for his novel *Piquillo Aliaga*.

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gans. Freedom of speech was practically inhibited, and political views could be aired only when properly toned down and doctored. The subscription list of *Les Débats* fell from 12,000 to 9,000; that of *La Presse* from 25,000 to 15,000. The papers endeavored heroically to cover the paucity of political material by amusing *feuilletons*. The performances at the theaters, actors and actresses, the belles of the public balls, scandals of high life, were dissected in the airiest way, and with a circumstantiality and sense of importance that would have befitted affairs of state. *Raconteurs* like Jules Janin and Alphonse Karr developed a virtuosity as splendid as it was striking, in the recounting of this small talk.

The relative circulation of the six principal newspapers in Paris in 1858 was in this order: *Le Siècle*, *La Presse*, *Le Constitutionnel*, *La Patrie*, *Les Débats*, *L'Assemblée Nationale*. The number of journals, so greatly diminished in 1853, was again augmented in the '60s, owing to the pecuniary success of Girardin's commercialism, which lowered the tone of the press, just as sensational methods have affected our own American press to-day. The most admirable papers of the traditional style made the least money. The times were ripe for *Le Figaro* (1854), and for Rochefort's *Lanterne* (the weekly pamphlet, 1868; the daily paper, 1877), which marked the return to power of the political press. The few other important papers established during the eighteen years of the Second Empire were *Le Temps* (first founded in 1829—discontinued 1842—reappeared 1861), *La France* (1862), *Le Petit Journal* (1863), *Le Gaulois* (1866). During the closing days of the third Napoleon's reign the press received a new impetus, and many political papers of more or less vitality, such as *Le Rappel*, *La Marseillaise*, and *Le Journal de Paris*, appeared. The revolution of September, 1870, also called forth its quota of new journals, as in 1848, and the insurrection of the Commune similarly evoked a journalistic ephemera that flourished for a day and passed from view.

A curious phenomenon of French journalism is the one-man paper, which owes its amazing influence and popularity to the truculence of its editor, and his capacity for amusing and original abuse. Its foremost exponent is Victor Henri, Marquis de Rochefort-Luçay, commonly known as Henri

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Rochefort, born in 1830, and who, after more than forty years of extravagant denunciation and political somersaulting, has not quite exhausted his vocabulary of invective or his capacity for inconsistency. Aristocrat by birth, idol of the cabman and the waiter, a professional opponent of the Government, assailant, by turns, of the Emperor and the army, the church, and the Jew, a duelist of renown, a political exile to whom prison and transportation have been the alternate episodes of a triumphant career—Henri Rochefort has thrived on excitement. We can conceive of no one to whom the newspaper "Interviewer" might put with more relish, if with questionable profit, the perennial question, "To what, venerable sir, do you attribute your longevity?" The records of serene senility will not be complete without it. Henri Rochefort has not perhaps greatly enriched the dictionary of the Academy, but American and British visitors in the French capital insist that the cabman has found in him a constant source of comfort and inspiration. To attempt more than the briefest recountal of his tempestuous career would make his place in these pages seem disproportionate. His peculiar genius first illuminated the pages of *Le Charivari*. In the '60s we see him as "chroniqueur" to *Le Figaro*, expanding with a verbal intemperance which presently caused the conversion of that paper from a sheet for the delectation of the "boulevardier" to an avowed political journal. He received at that time an annual salary of thirty thousand francs. Many years later, in 1896, it transpired in court proceedings that Rochefort of *L'Intransigeant* had, since 1889, drawn as editor and shareholder, a sum equivalent to three hundred and forty-two thousand francs a year. A tyrannical government has at various times suppressed the property and sequestered the person of this blue-blooded *ami du peuple*, though without permanent effect. It was to save *Le Figaro* from seizure that he left its service in 1865 and started *La Lanterne*, printed on pink paper, which was other than a symbol of propriety. Its first nine weekly issues reached a circulation of more than 1,150,000 copies, when the Government forbade its further publication in Paris, and M. Rochefort took it with him to Brussels. It now flourishes in Paris as a rabid organ of the anti-clericals. On his return to

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Paris in 1880, after one of his temporary eclipses—it was New Caledonia, London, and Geneva this time—M. Rochefort took charge of the radical *Intransigeant*, which, with some interruptions, including the Boulanger episode of exile, he continues to direct. Some critics have compared M. Rochefort to Mirabeau; others content themselves with an expletive or two from his own thesaurus.

We have approached that period, already alluded to, in which we observe the radical transformation of the French press from a literary supplement or *feuilleton*, plus the news and a broadside of opinion, to a newspaper in which the news threatens to predominate. It does not seem likely that the literary character of French journalism at its best shall be really lost. It is even reasonable to suppose that from the adjustment of new and old conditions there may arise an ideal press combining accuracy and freshness of information with the sprightliness, fancy, and grace of presentation with which the Parisian writer so happily clothes the most trivial of occurrences. Dullness is not in the blood of the Frenchman. If at times life is not gay, why then it becomes to him too serious to be taken seriously. One thing seems sure: if the *journal d'informations* kills the journal of the *feuilleton*, it must first kill the Parisian's wit and taste, and inherent gayety of disposition. A Frenchman who does not want to be amused is almost as inconceivable as a Frenchman who would find amusement in the banalités of our "yellow" journalism, or in the dullness of its more respected contemporaries.

The causes that have brought about the radical changes in the French press within the last few years are open to speculation. Some observers ascribe them to the less leisurely ways of life in the French capital, as expressed especially in rapid transit. A significant factor, too, is the growth of republican ideas, which in removing restrictions from the press, have left it free to extend its functions as a purveyor of news and opinions. The *feuilleton*, it is recalled, was a device of Bertin, owner of the *Débats*, and he was inspired to employ it, in 1800, because under the despotic rule of Napoleon, it was not possible to publish a newspaper otherwise than innocuous, or, in other words, devoid of information and opin-

ion. The tradition of the *feuilleton* has held, and recurring periods of restriction have continued to impose it somewhat disproportionately upon a public awakening more and more to the means for the diffusion of news. As yet, journalistic polemics—a euphemism when applied to the one-man journals—have precedence; but, as it is not possible always and ever to defy facts, the publication of the news is beginning to exercise a wholesome influence on those editors who have heretofore found it convenient to ignore them.

When we come to catalogue the contemporary newspapers of Paris, the task at first sight seems appalling. The period has not yet passed in France when one can found a newspaper with no more substantial capital than an original talent for vituperation and printer's ink enough for your limited edition. In the United States the projection of a newspaper in any considerable city is an undertaking of pecuniary consequence. It must, in the first place, print the news; and this, provided the thing can be done at all, with the assistance of an Associated Press franchise—involves a large outlay. But in Paris a journal may be the impulsive creation of a politician with a grievance, of a free lance who has found a patron, or a pamphleteer who finds it profitable to espouse a cause or to denounce an idea. The so-called news service of the "Agence Havas" is easily and cheaply procured; two or three reporters constitute the staff. For the rest, it is the editor's own personality that counts; and the journal is born, and sometimes achieves a circulation, with little travail. Thus, in the Paris of recent years, as in certain former periods we have noted, the ephemeral fraction of the press may be likened, in its multiplicity, to a swarm of flies. Newspapers appear and disappear, change their political opinions, pass from one owner to another, from morning to evening editions, with a rapidity that is mystifying to the Anglo-Saxon looker on. Moreover, the Paris press is in a state of transition, and of such quick transition that five years of its record becomes a cycle in significance.

No less than 2,400 newspapers were published in France in 1900, of which 240 appeared in Paris, including 146 dailies of all descriptions. In 1903 the number of the Parisian political daily organs is placed by one authority at sixty, in round

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numbers. In circulation these journals vary from the 500 lithographed sheets (distributed to as many newspapers throughout France) of *La Correspondance Nationale et Nouvelles*—official organ of the Duc d'Orléans—to *Le Petit Journal*, variously credited with a daily issue of from 1,000,000 to 1,250,000 copies. This paper of the populace, founded by Millaud in 1863, was the precursor of the penny press. Millaud had the knack of providing the sort of cheap and entertaining reading relished by the *concierge* and the *ouvrier*. Not only in Paris, but in all the little towns of France, it was especially made welcome in the homes of the humble. If its business agents were Americans, they would say it had become a "household word." It does not meddle much in politics, preferring the safe course of offending no one. Yet, it is not without great political influence, with the strength of such a constituency behind it. The control of *Le Petit Journal* passed long ago from Millaud to Marinoni, inventor of the rotary printing press, and finally to Senator Privet, a Nationalist. On one of the few occasions when it took a political stand, and opposed the cause of Dreyfus, it suffered in popularity. Senator Jean Dupuy, former Minister of Agriculture and principal owner of *Le Petit Parisien*, perceived his opportunity, and his paper, which had relied on the patronage of the cabman and market gardener, was enlarged to six pages and soon became a formidable rival of *Le Petit Journal*, reaching a circulation of 700,000 copies a day at the beginning of this century.

But *Le Matin*, dating from 1884, and devoting more attention to news than to politics, is the paper most significant of the new journalism in France. It rose from the ruins of *The Morning News*,¹ the unsuccessful venture of the Ameri-

¹ When James Gordon Bennett founded the *Paris Herald* it gave the coup de grâce to *The Morning News* and Galignani's *Messenger*. No less a person than Thackeray was once a subeditor on Galignani's *Messenger*. He refers to it in a letter to Mrs. Brookfield, in 1848, in which he speaks of an old acquaintance, a Mr. Longueville Jones, as "an excellent, worthy, accomplished fellow. . . . We worked on Galignani's *Messenger* for ten francs a day very cheerfully, ten years ago." It was in those days that Thackeray gathered his notes for his *Paris Sketch Book* and the *Ballad of Bouillabaisse*.

can dentist, Dr. Thomas Evans,¹ and was viewed as a trans-Atlantic enterprise. Regarded as the competitor of the Paris edition of the New York Herald, and by some persons identified with its ownership, *Le Matin* was until recently looked upon as a somewhat nondescript publication. To-day it takes the lead in the printing of foreign news, and is engaged in the promotion of such adventures as the Pekin-Paris automobile race. It has likewise enlisted the services of many distinguished contributors on current topics, and, with M. Hugues Leroux, took a leading part in the campaign for the correction of certain misconceptions supposed to be entertained in England and the United States respecting the character of French literature. *Le Matin* is owned by a company under the control of M. Bunau-Varilla, brother of the distinguished engineer, and is edited by M. Stéphane Lauzanne, nephew of the late M. de Blowitz. A rival and imitator of *Le Matin* is the anti-Anglo-Saxon *L'Éclair*. It has also a competitor, both in news and circulation, in *Le Journal*, which is one of the important moderate Republican morning dailies; it reached an enviable standard of literary excellence under the editorship of the late Ferdinand Xau, and in exploiting the news it has not suffered a decline in ideals. Its present owner is a rich Government contractor, M. Letellier. *L'Écho de Paris*, an organ of Nationalism, and originally a competitor of *Le Gil Blas*, has enrolled itself among the *journaux d'informations*, and is credited with an excellent foreign news service.

It is scarcely possible to recount in a paragraph the singular vicissitudes and varied characteristics of that chameleon of Parisian journalism, *Le Figaro*. A gay cynicism and a buoyant determination to keep its columns free from the hampering shackles of principles and views have marked its erratic and entertaining career. "The policy of the paper"—vague and formidable phrase—is assumed to represent, more or less concretely, the form and direction of the moral and political vehicle we call journalism, as impelled by cer-

¹ It was Dr. Evans who, after the fall of the Second Empire, helped the Empress Eugénie to reach Sir John Burgoyne's yacht, in order that she might take refuge in England.

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tain individuals of avowed responsibility. But to have no policy at all, and not to deny it, is vastly more convenient, and, not infrequently, less hypocritical. When we say that *Le Figaro* has been thus unrestricted, a good deal is explained. When we add that its primary function has been to amuse and to shock, and that no one takes it over-seriously, its influence can be better estimated and understood. It is, of all Parisian journals, the best known to the foreigner; and it appears to the Briton and the American (who, as a rule, know only that side of it), to be typical of the French temperament.

De Villemessant, a semi-illiterate adventurer and journalistic genius, who refounded *Le Figaro* in 1854, and turned it into a daily twelve years later, had the courage of his lack of convictions. He understood the weaknesses of human nature, and the foibles of his countrymen; and he played upon them adroitly. The world to him was a fancy-dress ball, and he, the master of ceremonies, wore the most ingenious costume. In the early '70s we see him, as it were, two persons at once—half his head shaved into the likeness of a monk, the other half of it painted to resemble Harlequin. A Legitimist praying for the restoration of "le roi," he intoned a chant that brought him the patronage of the pious; a Merry Andrew, with suggestive wink, the ultraworldly thrived on the entertainment he provided them. It is said that when Louis Veuillot proclaimed his *Univers* as the greatest organ of Catholicity, de Villemessant flourished his subscription list, with the offer to wager that it, and not Veuillot's, contained the greater number of clerical names. And the bet was not taken up. De Villemessant undoubtedly made his paper readable. To this end he secured the services of the most brilliant writers of the moment, dropping them quickly when they had served his turn. He exploited the imitators of Eugène Guinot (who had revived the *Chronique* system); Jules Janin, Karr, About, Fouquier, and Albert Wolff—a German who wrote admirably in French, and a celebrated chronicler of *Le Figaro*. On the theory "tout homme a un article dans le ventre" (every man knows something he can write about), he one day pressed a chimney-sweep into his service, and somehow extracted from him an article that aroused the curiosity of Paris. He was

all things to all men, and nothing long by turns. His successor, Francis Magnard, upheld the traditions ably; and the foremost journal of the boulevards shone with even a brighter luster. In his personal contributions to the paper he brought to perfection, says one critic, "the art of jumping with the cat." Also he procured the assistance of the ablest writers of the day, including Jules Simon, and in other ways maintained the journal's popularity. It is only in recent years that this popularity has suffered. One cannot always "jump with the cat." In the days of the bitter Dreyfus controversy, the new editors of *Le Figaro*, with de Rodays as the chief, attempted the still more difficult feat of holding with the hare and running with the hounds. In their brief championship of Zola and Dreyfus they erred in their observation of the public's attitude, and though a quick change of front was effected, *Le Figaro's* circulation was diminished. To-day it is under the control of Gaston Calmette, and is reported to be recovering its ground. *Le Figaro* has not lost its animation of tone. Perhaps like its progenitor, the hero of Beaumarchais, if it ever becomes wholly virtuous it will also be dull.

Lacking the "esprit gaulois" of *Le Figaro*, and yet regarded in a measure as a rival, is that boulevard journal, *Le Gaulois*, born to the Royalist purple in 1866, with Henri de Pène as sponsor, and—under Arthur Mayer, its editor to-day—a doughty champion of the Church and the Duc d'Orléans. M. Mayer is something of an anomaly. A Jew himself, his journal is anti-Semitic. Snubbed by the Pretender to the throne, he defends him and proclaims his cause none the less zealously. A rich man, he has not lost his enthusiasm or his relish for work. *Le Gaulois* is the favorite paper of the *Faubourg St. Germain*, and this is some compensation to M. Mayer for the duke's eccentric behavior in advocating an alliance with perfidious Albion. Another imperialistic paper is *L'Autorité*, of Paul de Cassagnac, duelist and pamphleteer. He, too, is against the Government and the Jew; but a milder and saner type than the more optimistic Mayer. With a sentimental regard for the setting sun of monarchy is *Le Soleil*, spokesman of the Orleanists, a journal which shone resplendent under the direction of the late Édouard Hervé, a member of the French Academy. With Jules Lemaître and Fran-

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gois Coppée on its staff, its literary flavor was not lost after the death of its editor; but it, too, suffered in the Dreyfus affair, and is on the decline.

What shall we say of Drumont, whose daily battle cry in *La Libre Parole* is "down with the Jew and the Briton!"? His paper would be quite impossible in this country; for, quite aside from our ideas of tolerance, an anti-Jewish journal would not enjoy much advertising patronage. But in France, where journals are supported by subsidies, and where "la réclame," or the paid "puff," has been fostered in a way quite foreign to American notions of propriety, it is possible to make such a newspaper pay. *La Libre Parole*, which fomented the Dreyfus affair, is prosperous, and wields great political influence. Drumont, whose published photographs suggest the bomb-throwing anarchist, is a man of scholarly attainments. But his learning and style are nullified by reckless mendacity and venom of utterance. Yet such is the feeling against the Jew in France—stimulated, perhaps, by Drumont's extravagant book, *La France Juive*—that the clergy has been conspicuous in the list of his subscribers.

Some mention must be made of *L'Humanité*, the organ of the Socialist leader, Jaurès, whose unquenchable oratory is thereby spread far and wide; *La République Française*, in which the torch of Gambetta is borne on by Joseph Reinach; *L'Aurore*,¹ of which Georges Clémenceau was a former editor; the anti-clerical *Le Radical*, and *Le Rappel*; *Le Gil Blas*,² a naughty paper somewhat diminished in consequence; *La Liberté*, a Republican paper with a leaning to the news, and *Le XIXème Siècle*, founded by Edmond About. The catalogue degenerates into a gazetteer.

The solid, substantial, and most important newspaper in

¹ It was *L'Aurore* that, in 1898, published Émile Zola's famous letter, *J'accuse*, in which he attacked the officers of the Dreyfus court-martial, and for which both Zola and the *Aurore's* editor, M. Perreux, were fined and imprisoned.

² *Le Gil Blas* made its appearance as a literary weekly, a quarter of a century ago, with Gambetta as a backer, and became so successful that its daring purchasers converted it into a daily devoted wholly to literature. Maupassant, Zola, Mendès, and Anatole France were among its contributors. Then it took a hand in politics, but that has not enlarged its reputation.

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France is, of course, *Le Temps*, which, like *Les Débats*, is published in the afternoon. It is able, it is heavy, it is dignified—it has, in short, many of the characteristics of its London namesake, including the tendency to publish parliamentary addresses and other sober orations in full. No one who wishes to read a verbatim report of the maiden address of a new Immortal will begrudge it its price of three cents. It prints the semi-official Government announcements, and upholds the dignity of the nation. It is nothing, if not intellectual—it has been the medium of Sainte-Beuve and of Sarcey; and it is ever informing and accurate, and only those persons who insist upon being entertained as well as instructed—and who may be dismissed with the frivolous majority in France—find it dull. *Le Temps* is mildly anti-clerical, and is the only French paper of consequence that is Protestant in policy. It was established by Alsatian Protestants, in 1861, at a time when Napoleon III had come to feel that a modification of the rigid press censorship would be judicious. Its editor, A. Nefftzer, with several associates, made its influence felt at once; but the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War demoralized the patriotic staff. Nefftzer dropped his pen and died, and in 1871 the journal, greatly impaired in prestige and fortune, was bought for a small sum by a company formed by Adrien Hébrard. His capacity as a manager, united with a breadth of view and a thorough knowledge of world politics that his service in the Senate has enriched, have made it possible for him to put *Le Temps* on the eminence it occupies to-day.

The religious press is an important factor in France. *La Croix*, the organ of the Roman Catholic clergy, has its headquarters in Paris, and nearly two hundred local editions in as many provincial towns. Its circulation is rivaled only by that of the *Le Petit Journal*, and its influence is, of course, considerable. Obviously, it is anti-Republican; at the time of the disaffection of the South in the early summer of 1907, the enemies of *La Croix* in the Chamber of Deputies charged it with sowing the seeds of dissension by evoking visions of a happier France under kingly rule.

L'Univers, moderate and dignified in tone, became famous through its great editor, the late Louis Veuillot. Guarding

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the interests of the Catholics, and espousing the Orleanist cause, it makes a secular appeal in its columns devoted to literature and the drama, and even to the horse-races, and is, on the whole, political rather than religious.

The provinces no longer look wholly to Paris for news and views, and the provincial press has made great strides since 1880. *La Dépêche*, of Toulouse prints twelve daily editions, and circulates through a large area. Two other Republican dailies are *Le Nouvelliste de Lyon* and *Le Petit Marseillais*. These, with other provincial papers, have their representatives in Paris, and receive news reports by wire.

FRENCH PERIODICALS

The unillustrated French magazines and reviews, at their best, represent a higher order of merit than the contemporary French Press, and are not excelled by those of any country. Periodical literature originated in France, and the magazines of other European nations have followed French models. The great *Journal des Savants*, first issued on January 5, 1665, by Denis de Sallo, scholar and nobleman, under the nominal editorship of his secretary, d'Hédouville, and continued by the Abbé Jean Gallois and others, soon became the mouthpiece of letters and science. It made all knowledge its own. History, mechanics, medicine, the natural sciences, poetry—there was nothing in the domain of the intellect that it did not seek to exploit. Curiously enough, its constituency took exception to poetry, as beneath the serious consideration of a scientific journal. The intellectual aristocracy of France were its supporters, and—suppressed and revived at intervals—it remained the foremost exponent of contemporary life and thought until the appearance of *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*. This magazine is now the best publication of its kind in France—perhaps the best in the world as a purveyor of pure literature and criticism. Started in 1831 by François Buloz, it soon became the forum of literary and scientific France. Buloz (1804-77), was a shepherd in his youth, and was educated by a patron who took a fancy to him. On coming to Paris he worked as a compositor, and saved enough money to buy the moribund *Revue*. A born

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editor, he possessed in a remarkable degree all the qualifications for managing an enterprise of this description. He was painstaking, far-sighted, and endowed with a singularly keen scent for matters of current interest, for everything that was "actuel." It was Buloz, who, when a philosopher handed him a treatise on the nature and substance of the Godhead, rejected it with the remark, "Dieu n'est pas actuel." He did not, however, like some of our American editors, fall a victim to "timeliness" by trespassing on the functions of journalism. The literary integrity of the great journal was kept intact. In 1833 *La Revue des Deux-Mondes* began the publication of political articles, and from that time on it became a perfect mirror of the times. All men of literary consequence—Alfred de Musset, Mignet, Guizot, Villemain, de Vigny, Augustin Thierry, de Rémusat, Sainte-Beuve, Jules Sandeau, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Balzac, Octave Feuillet, Taine, Renan, Havet—contributed to it, and all of them subordinated themselves to the despotic will of Buloz, who used his blue pencil without mercy whenever the interests of his paper so demanded. In 1845 *La Revue* was reorganized and converted into a stock company, and the undertaking now represents an annual net earning capacity of five hundred thousand francs. Upon the death of Buloz, his son assumed the management, and retained it until 1893, when the distinguished littérateur, Ferdinand Brunetière (born 1849 at Toulon, recently deceased), became the editor. For a time, Madame Adam's *La Nouvelle Revue* and *La Revue Politique et Littéraire* endeavored to outstrip *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, but without success.

The growth of the illustrated French magazines is unimportant. *L'Illustration*, *Le Monde Illustré*, *Le Magasin Pittoresque*, etc., are excellent of their kind. The humorous publications, *Le Charivari* (1832), *Le Petit Journal pour Rire*, *Le Journal Amusant*, etc., although they possess the distinguishing French characteristic of spontaneous grace and recklessness, do not rise to the level one might expect in a nation of such lively imagination and delicate art. Often, indeed, these publications seem not only pointless to the Americans, but shockingly vulgar as well. A satirical journal worthy of the French literary genius is yet to be born.

APPENDIX

THE FORTY IMMORTALS OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

	Year Elected.	Name.
1	1870	Émile Ollivier.
2	1874	Alfred Jean François Mézières.
3	1886	Comte d'Haussonville (Othénin P. de Cléron).
4	1888	Jules Arnaud Arsène Claretie.
5	1888	Vicomte de Vogüé (Eugène Marie Melchior).
6	1890	Charles Louis de Saulses de Freycinet.
7	1891	Louis Marie Julien Viaud (Pierre Loti).
8	1892	Ernest Lavisse.
9	1893	Paul Louis Thureau-Dangin.
10	1894	Paul Bourget.
11	1894	Henri Houssaye.
12	1895	Jules Lemaître.
13	1896	Jacques Anatole Thibault (Anatole France).
14	1896	Marquis de Beauregard (Marie C. A. Costa).
15	1896	Comte Vandal (Louis Jules Albert).
16	1897	Comte de Mun (Albert).
17	1897	Gabriel Hanotaux.
18	1899	Henri Léon Émile Lavedan.
19	1899	Paul Deschanel.
20	1900	Paul Hervieu.
21	1900	Auguste Émile Faguet.
22	1901	Marquis de Vogüé (Charles Jean Melchior).
23	1901	Edmond Rostand.
24	1903	Frédéric Masson.
25	1903	René Bazin.
26	1905	Étienne Lamy.
27	1906	Alexandre Félix Joseph Ribot.
28	1906	Maurice Barrès.
29	1906	Cardinal Mathieu (François Désiré).
30	1907	Marquis de Ségur.
31	1907	Maurice Donnay.

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	Year Elected.	Name.
32	1907	Maitre André Barbour.
33	1908	Francis Charmes.
34	1908	Jean Richepin.
35	1908	Henri Poincaré.
36	1909	Raymond Poincaré.
37	1909	Eugène Brioux.
38	1909	Jean Aicard.
39	1909	René Doumic.
40	1909	Marcel Prévost.

RULERS OF FRANCE

I

MEROVINGIAN DYNASTY

481-751 (TEUTONIC RULERS)

Clovis (First Christian King)	481-511
Division of Gaul into several kingdoms. Mayors of palace (chiefs of the <i>leudes</i> or nobles) becoming actual rulers and reducing the kings to "do-naughts" (<i>rois fainéants</i>)	511-751

II

CAROLINGIAN DYNASTY

751-987

Pepin the Short (Le Bref)	751-768
Charles I, the Great (Charlemagne)	768-814
Louis I, the Pious (Le Pieux or Le Débonnaire)	814-840
Division of kingdom by three sons of Louis I.	840-843
Charles II, the Bald (Le Chauve)	843-877
Louis II, the Stammerer (Le Bègue)	877-879
Louis III, and his brother Carloman	879-884
Charles the Fat (Le Gros)	884-887
Eudes, or Odo, Count of Paris	887-898
Charles III, the Simple (Le Simple or le Sot)	898-923
(Robert I, the "Fame-bright," was chosen king of France in opposition to Charles the Simple in 922)	
Raoul of Burgundy	923-936

APPENDIX

Louis IV, from beyond the Seas (D'Outre-Mer)	936-954
Lothair	954-986
Louis V, the Sluggard (Le Fainéant)	986-987

III

CAPETIAN DYNASTY

987-1328

Hugh Capet	987- 996
Robert II, the Pious (Le Pieux)	996-1031
Henry I	1031-1060
Philip I	1060-1108
Louis VI, the Fat (Le Gros)	1108-1137
Louis VII, the Young (Louis-Flores or Le Jeune)	1137-1180
Philip II, Augustus	1180-1223
Louis VIII, the Lion (Le Lion)	1223-1226
Louis IX, Saint Louis (Canonized 1279)	1226-1270
Philip III, the Bold (Le Hardi)	1270-1285
Philip IV, the Fair (Le Bel)	1285-1314
Louis X, the Quarreler (Le Hutin)	1314-1316
Philip V, the Tall (Le Long)	1316-1322
Charles IV, the Fair (Le Bel)	1322-1328

IV

THE HOUSE OF VALOIS

(INCLUDING THE VALOIS-DIRECT—THE VALOIS-ORLEANS—AND THE
VALOIS-ANGOULÊME)

1328-1589

Philip VI (Valois)	1328-1350
John II, the Good (Le Bon)	1350-1364
(John I (le Posthume), was the posthumous son of Louis X, and lived only a few days)	
Charles V, the Wise (Le Sage)	1364-1380
Charles VI, the Well-Beloved, also the Mad (Le Bien- Aimé or Le Fou)	1380-1422
Charles VII, the Victorious (Le Victorieux)	1422-1461
Louis XI	1461-1483
Charles VIII	1483-1498
Louis XII, the Father of the People (le Père du peuple)	1498-1515

APPENDIX

Francis I	1515-1547
Henry II	1547-1559
Francis II	1559-1560
Charles IX	1560-1574
Henry III	1574-1589

V

THE BOURBONS

1589-1793

Henry IV	1589-1610
Louis XIII, the Just (Le Juste)	1610-1643
(Regency of Marie de Medicis 1610-1614)	
Louis XIV, the Great, the Sun King (Le Grand)	1643-1715
Regency of Anne of Austria, 1643-1661)	
Louis XV, the Well-Beloved (Le Bien-Aimé)	1715-1774
(Regency of Duke of Orleans, 1715-1723)	
Louis XVI	1774-1792
(Louis XVII proclaimed King of France by the <i>Émigrés</i> after the execution of Louis XVI; supposed to have died 1795)	

VI

FIRST REPUBLIC

1792-1804

National Convention.	Sept. 1792-Oct. 1795
Directory	Oct. 1795-Nov. 1799
The Consulate	Nov. 1799-Oct. 1804

VII

FIRST EMPIRE

1804-1814

Napoleon I	1804-1814
(Napoleon II, titular Emperor of the French, born 1811, died 1832)	

VIII

THE RESTORATION

1814-1830

First Restoration: Louis XVIII	1814-1824
Second Restoration: Charles X	1824-1830
Louis-Philippe I, the Citizen King (le Roi Citoyen)	1830-1848

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IX

SECOND REPUBLIC

1848-1852

Provisional Government	Feb. to Dec. 1848
Louis Napoleon, President	1848-1852

X

SECOND EMPIRE

1852-1870

Napoleon III	1852-1870
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XI

THIRD REPUBLIC

Committee of Public Defense	1870-1871
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Presidents

L. A. Thiers	1871-1873
Marshal MacMahon	1873-1879
Jules Grévy	1879-1887
Marie F. S. Carnot	1887-1894
Jean Casimir Périer	1894-1895
Félix François Faure	1895-1899
Émile Loubet	1899-1906
Armand Fallières	1906-

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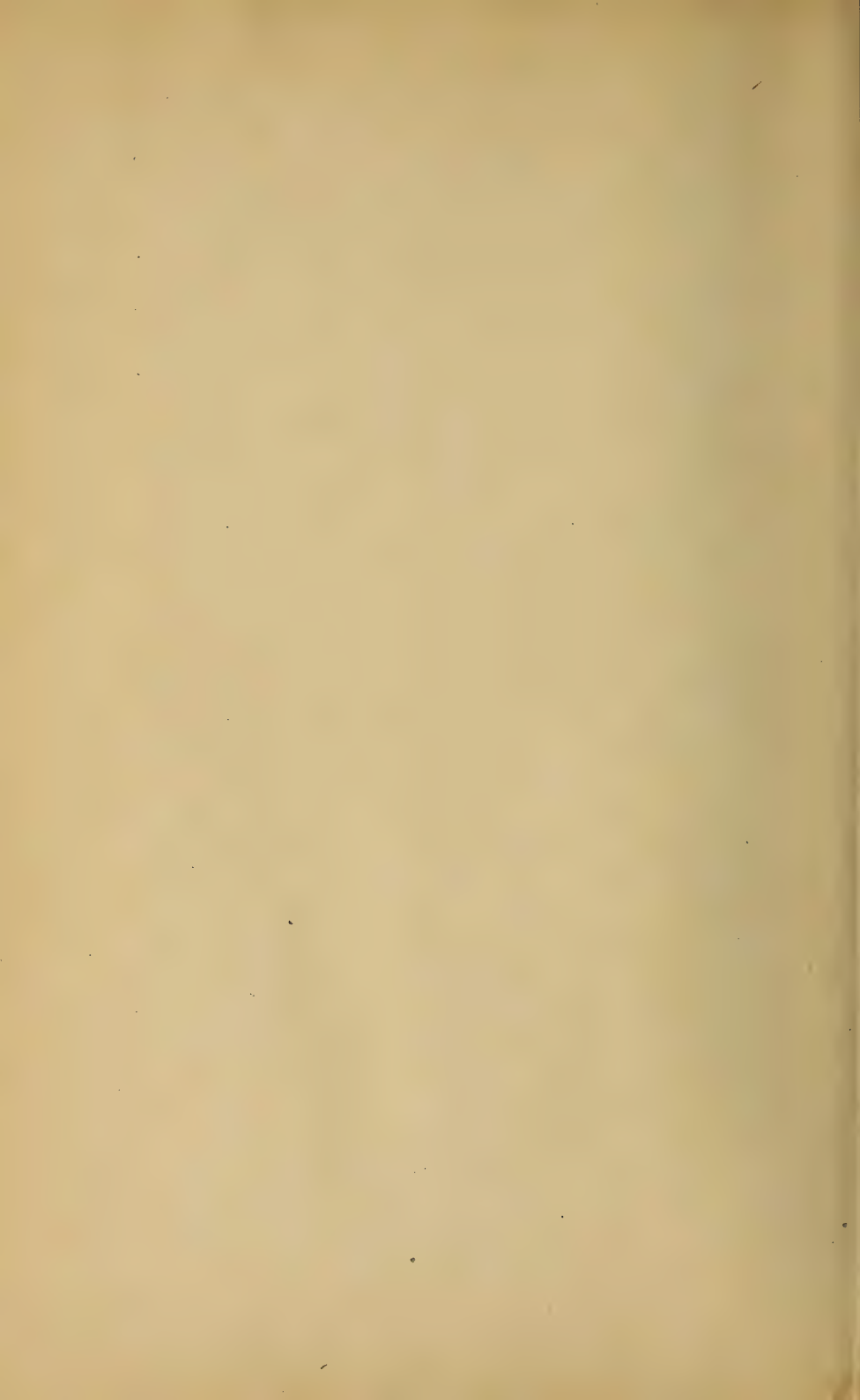
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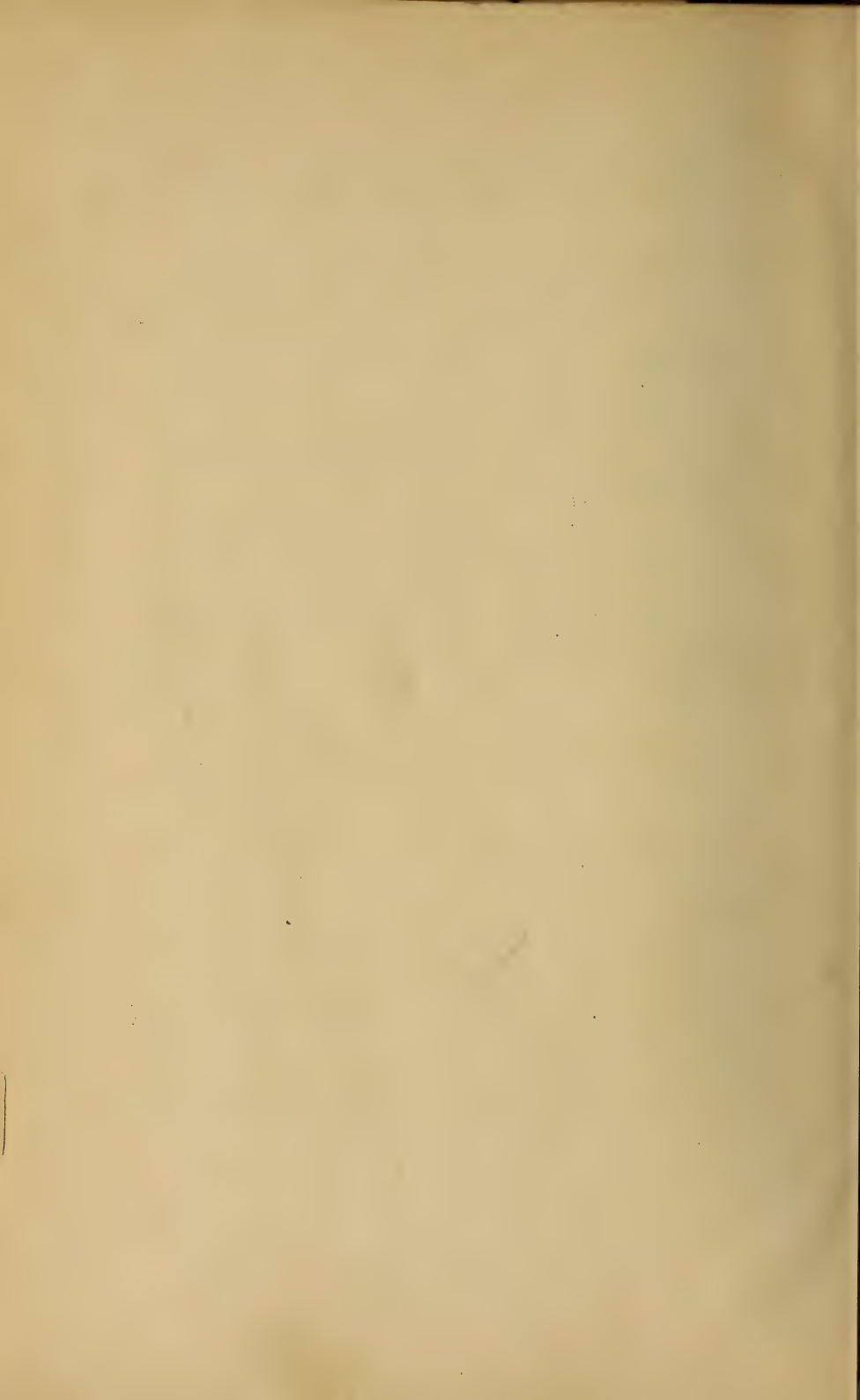
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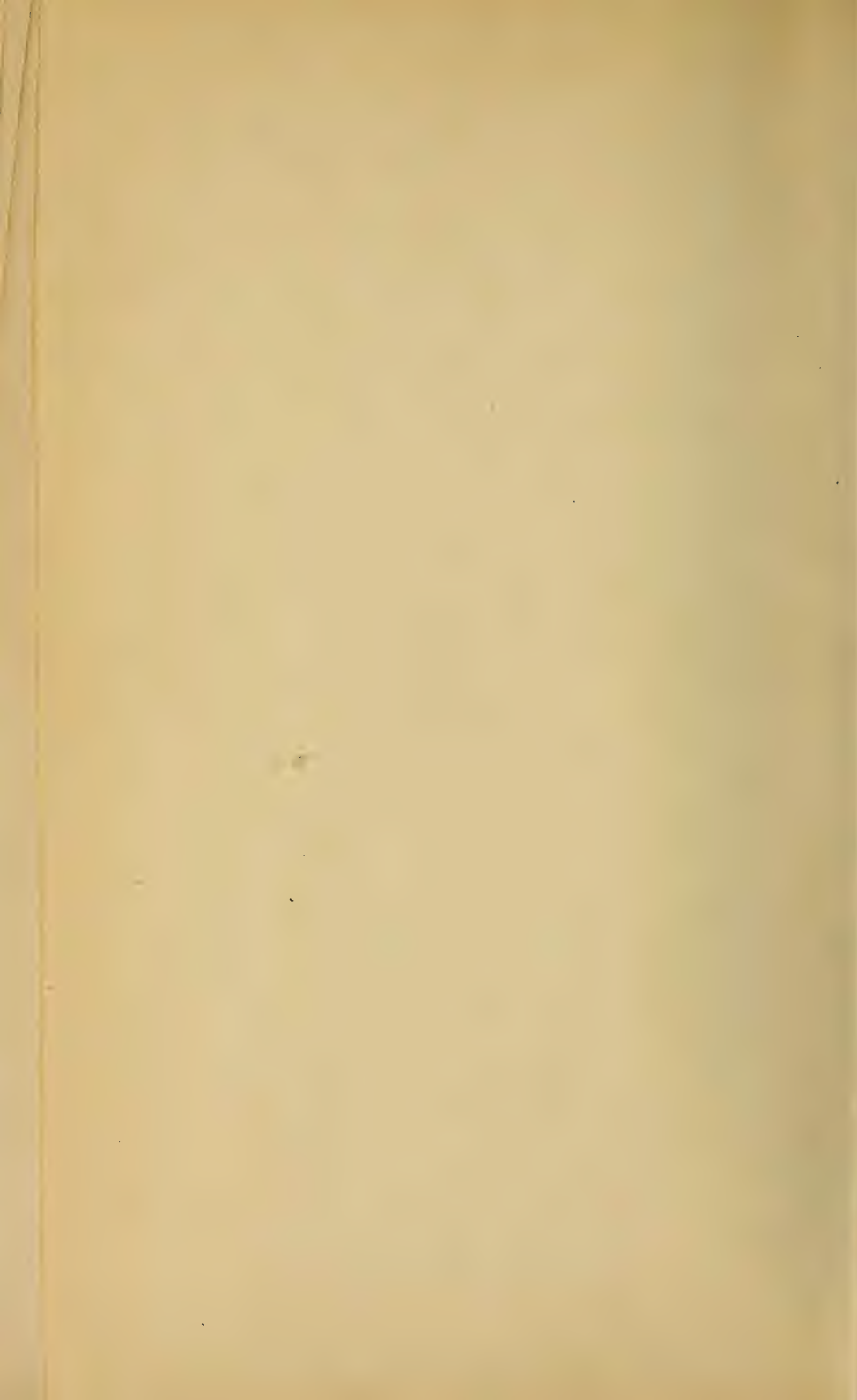
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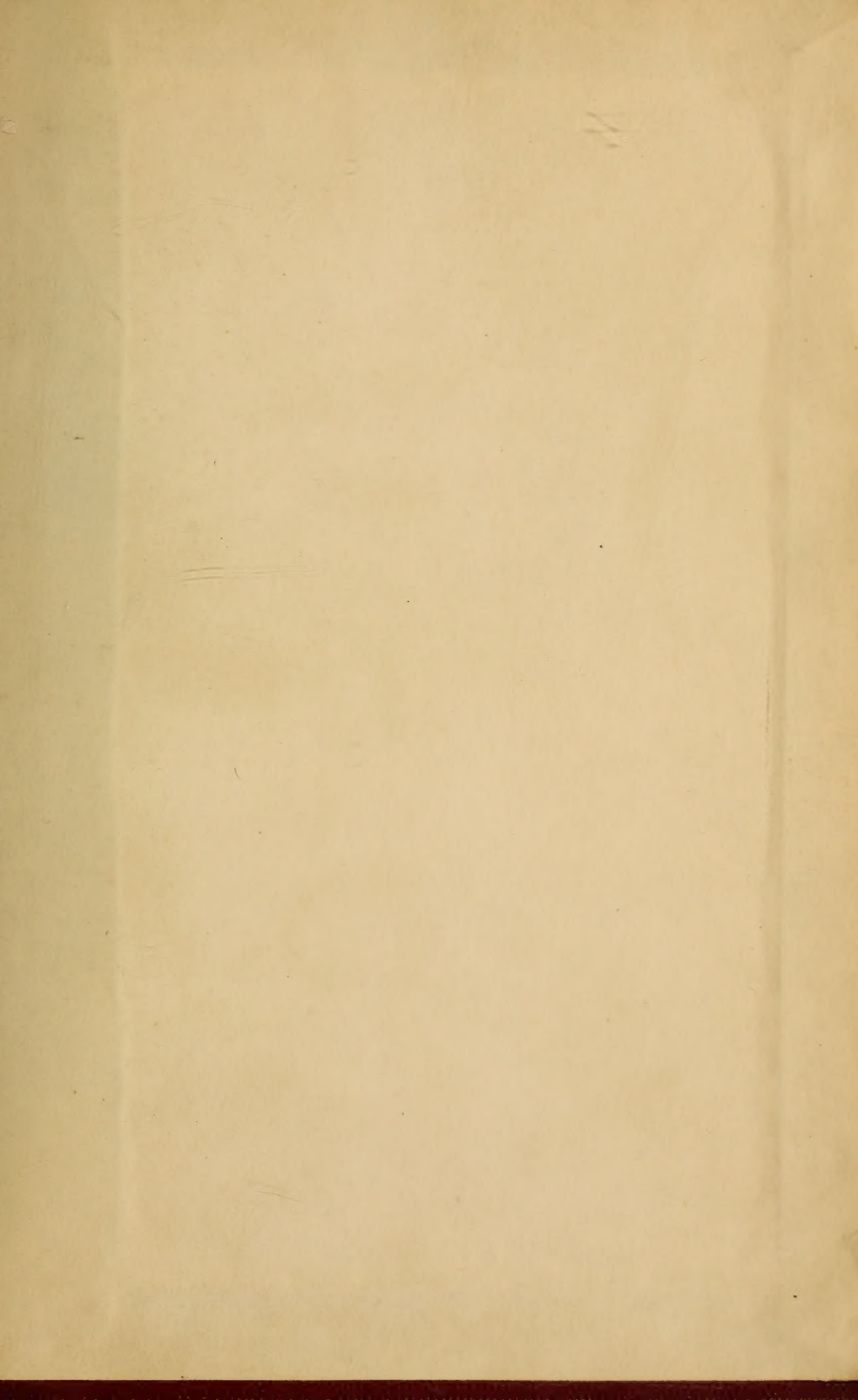
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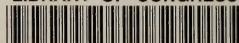
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